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CHAPTER CLOSED
BUT NOT FULLY:
WARNER
12 SPORTS

MODI'S MOSCOW HUG

India embraces all weather friend Russia

PIONEER NEWS
SERVICE/AGENCIES ■ NEW
DELHI/MOSCOW

India and Russia on Tuesday reviewed the entire spectrum of their bilateral ties and ongoing Ukraine conflict with Prime Minister Narendra Modi saying peace dialogue does not succeed amidst guns and bullets. He also said no solution is possible in the battlefield. Modi said stronger ties between India and Russia will greatly benefit the people. He was officially conferred Russia's most prestigious civilian honour — the Order of St Andrew the Apostle — by President Putin for exceptional services in promoting bilateral ties between the two countries. On his bilateral talks with Putin, Modi in his opening remarks said he conveyed to Russia President and assured the world community that India is on the side of peace and was ready to contribute in ending the conflict in Ukraine. “For a bright future for the new generation, peace is most essential...Peace talks do not succeed amidst bombs, guns and bullets,” he said. The Prime Minister also referred to his informal meeting with Putin on Monday and said listening to the Russian president lent



Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, left, and Russian President Vladimir Putin in embrace during an informal meeting at Novo-Ogaryovo residence, outside Moscow, Russia, on Monday

“hope”. While Modi did not explicitly mention Monday's Russian missile attack on a children's hospital in Ukraine, he said it was “heart-wrenching” to see innocent children dying. “Be it war, conflicts, terror attacks — everyone who believes in humanity is pained when there is loss of lives. But when innocent children are murdered, when we see innocent children dying, it is heart-wrenching. That pain is immense,” Modi said.

Ukraine frowns upon India

It is a huge disappointment and a devastating blow to peace efforts to see the leader of the world's largest democracy hug the world's most bloody criminal in Moscow on such a day

— Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy

“At our meeting yesterday, we listened to each other's views on Ukraine and I also placed before you the Global South's expectation on peace and stability,” Modi said. The Prime Minister also highlighted Russia's help to India in the energy sector. When the world was facing shortage of food, fuel and fertilisers, we did not allow our farmers to face any problem and our friendship with Russia played a role in that, Modi said. “We would want our cooperation with

Russia to expand further so as to ensure welfare of our farmers,” he said. The Prime Minister also flagged concerns over challenges of terrorism. “India has been facing the challenge of terrorism for around 40 years; I condemn all forms of terrorism,” Modi said. He said the world has to face multiple challenges in the last five years — first due Covid-19 and then because of various conflicts. Modi called terrorism ‘horrible,’ and condemned Moscow terror attack adding Moscow and Dagestan too have been a victim of terrorist attacks. “India has suffered from terrorism. We know how horrible it is. Recently there were terrorist attacks in Moscow and Dagestan... We condemn terrorist attacks,” Putin said during his bilateral meeting with Modi. Last week, terrorist attacks in Derbent and Makhachkala, two of the largest cities in Russia's Dagestan, killed 21 people and left 46 injured. Modi also said talks with Putin covered ways to diversify India-Russia cooperation in trade, commerce, security, agriculture, technology and innovation. “We attach great importance to boosting the connectivity and people-to-people exchanges” he added.

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Jammu terror trail: Shocking incursions

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

Massive combing and search operations were launched on Tuesday by the Indian Army, along with a team from the Special Operations Group (SOG) of the Jammu and Kashmir police, to pin down the perpetrators behind the ‘audacious terror attack’ on two Army vehicles. Five soldiers sacrificed their lives repulsing the attack near Badnota village of Machhedhi in the Billawar tehsil of Kathua district on Monday.

The Army's elite para-commandos and sniffer dogs also joined the search operation while drones and helicopters were pressed into service for surveillance. Some of the eyewitnesses were also questioned by the security forces to gather more information about the group of suspected foreign terrorists.

It is learned some of the villagers in the area had spotted suspicious movement of outsiders in the area but failed to timely inform the local police or other agencies for necessary follow-up action.

Director General of Police R R Swain also flew to the area to oversee the operation on the ground. Accompanied by ADGP Anand Jain, DGP Swain



Indian Army personnel during a counter-terror operation following a terrorist attack on an Army convoy, in Kathua district, on Tuesday

conducted an aerial survey of the area and reviewed the ongoing operations.

A team of National Investigation Agency (NIA) officials has been sent to Kathua in the Jammu region to extend all possible support to the police in its investigation. So far the probe agency has not registered a case to investigate the terrorist attack.

The scope of the search operations was expanded to encompass large areas in the adjoining districts of Udhampur and Kathua, including Basantgarh, Seoj (a high-altitude area in Udhampur), and the upper reaches of Bani, Daggar, and Kindli in Kathua district.

Reacting strongly in New Delhi, the Indian Government also sent out a stern warning claiming the sacrifices made by the soldiers in the Kathua ambush will not go ‘unavenged’. India will defeat the evil forces behind the attack.

Since October 11, 2021, 43 bravehearts have sacrificed their lives in different terror attacks and encounters in the Jammu region.

The counter-terrorist operations were temporarily stalled late Monday evening due to bad weather conditions. The suspected group of foreign terrorists also fled the spot taking advantage of the darkness and bad weather conditions.

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Weather forecasting to get tech upgrade



ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

In the backdrop of widespread social media jokes and public skepticism over recent weather predictions particularly for Delhi-NCR by the India Meteorological Department (IMD), the Centre has announced major upgrades in weather forecasting infrastructure across key Indian cities, including Delhi NCR.

As per plans, three dopplers radars and 180 automatic weather forecasting systems have been proposed for the national Capital and its adjoining regions while Mumbai will get four more In Mumbai, to take the tally to 6. Also, Kolkata is set to receive additional radar soon.

Waking up to the urgent need to have accurate equipment, the Government has plans on deploying

advanced technologies, including additional Automatic Weather Stations (AWS), radars, and a high-performance Computing (HPC) System with 20 petaflops capacity. These enhancements aim to align Delhi's forecasting capabilities with global standards, ultimately improving public safety and economic resilience against unexpected weather changes. “These upgrades are not limited to metro cities but will also benefit cities with populations exceeding 10 lakh. The overarching goal is to bolster weather forecasting capabilities in tier towns and remote areas nationwide,” Union Science and Technology Minister Dr Jitendra Singh said after holding a special high-level meeting convened to address public concerns amid the ongoing monsoon season across India.

He acknowledged the public dissatisfaction with the accuracy of recent forecasts, marked by several missed yellow and orange alerts. In fact failure in accurate alert has caught the citizens many times unaware, leaving them in the uncertainty as they suffered in severe heatwaves conditions on the one hand and flood like situation on the other.

The IMD is continuously improving weather forecast systems to help the common man and share the benefits of world-class weather forecasting technology, said the Minister even as he acknowledged that the recent monsoon season in Delhi has been marked by significant public dissatisfaction and skepticism over the accuracy of weather forecasts by the IMD.

According to experts, there are only 34 radars present in the country as of now. The number has increased by just 6 in the last 5 years. In contrast, the United States of America (USA) does weather prediction with almost 200 doppler radars. A media report quoted JP Sharma from Skymet saying that, “The Numerical Weather Model depends on how much data you have given and what the quality of data is. If you provide the wrong information, then it will get rejected.

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Delhi drowns, in yet another downpour

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

As heavy and sudden rain, lashed different parts of the national Capital on Tuesday, Delhiites were caught off guard as the rain created waterlogging in key areas and threw traffic out of gear.

Laxmi Nagar, Central Secretariat, Delhi Cantonment, Palam, Safdarjung, Parliament Street, Dilshad Garden, ITO and Greater Kailash, among others, recorded heavy rain.

The Public Works Department (PWD) said until afternoon, it received 22 calls regarding waterlogging and around three to four complaints of uprooted trees. The Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) received 11 calls regarding waterlogging and seven complaints of uprooted trees.

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) had earlier predicted that moderate rainfall accompanied by thunderstorms and lightning



A commuter gets drenched during rains in New Delhi on Tuesday

Ranjan Dimri

was likely to occur in many places.

The maximum temperature recorded in Delhi was 33.2 degrees Celsius, three notches below the normal. The minimum temperature settled at 27.2 degrees Celsius, 0.7 degrees below the normal. Additionally, the Spicejet airline said all departures and arrivals in Delhi and their consequential flights may get affected due to the bad weather and asked passengers to keep a check on their flight status.

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Relief eludes Kejriwal in liquor scam

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A special court on Tuesday took cognisance of the seventh supplementary chargesheet filed by the Enforcement Directorate in the money-laundering case linked to the alleged excise policy “scam”. The ED has named Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and Aam Aadmi Party in the supplementary chargesheet.

Special Judge Kaveri Baweja took cognisance of the chargesheet noting that there is sufficient material on record to proceed against the accused persons and listed the matter on July 12, when all the accused would be physically produced before the court.

The probe agency had filed a 200-page chargesheet naming Kejriwal and the AAP as accused in the case on May 17.

The ED has alleged that Kejriwal was intrinsically involved in the acts



File Photo: PTI

of policy formulation, kickback scheme and the final use of the proceeds of crime. The ED pointed out that Kejriwal is involved in the commission of grave economic offences and there is ample evidence on record to link him to the commission of the offence of money laundering.

In its chargesheet, which is the

eighth in a series of charge sheets filed by the ED since November 2022, the ED claimed that Kejriwal was directly involved in formulating the excise policy and demanded kickbacks from the South Group in exchange for awarding them favours. The ED also alleged that Kejriwal was involved in using ₹45 crore of the proceeds of crime in AAP's Goa election campaign.

Simultaneously, the court also took cognisance of the eighth supplementary chargesheet filed by ED and issued production warrants to Vinod Chauhan and issued summons to another accused Ashish Mathur, also named in the eighth supplementary chargesheet. Kejriwal's legal woes escalated when he was apprehended by the ED on March 21. Although he secured bail from the trial court, the High Court has since intervened, suspending the release order.

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Hathras A Conspiracy?



PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Uttar Pradesh Government on Tuesday suspended the local SDM, a circle officer and four others based on the SIT report on the Hathras stampede that did not rule out a “big conspiracy” behind the incident.

The SIT report also flagged lapses on the part of the local administration that led to the incident that claimed 121 lives on July 2.

The report held the organisers responsible for the stampede, claiming they did not make arrangements to manage the crowd and also fixed the responsibility of administration, according to official sources.

It said the local police and administration did not take the event seriously and failed to provide proper information to senior officers. The stampede at the ‘satsang’ of self-styled godman Surajpal alias Narayan Sakar Hari alias Bhole Baba claimed 121 lives.

“In its preliminary investigation, the SIT has held the event organisers primarily responsible for the stampede on the basis of eyewitnesses and other evidence. The SIT did not rule out any big conspiracy behind the incident and has stated the need for a thorough investigation,” officials said.

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Main accused in BMW case held

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Seventy two hours after he Srammed his BMW into a two-wheeler at Worli in south-central Mumbai killing a fisherwoman and injuring her husband, the Mumbai police tracked down the Shinde Shiv Sena deputy leader Rajesh Shah's absconding son Mihir Shah and arrested him from Shahpur town in the neighbouring Thane district. One of the search teams that had been on the look for the 24-year-old Mihir Shah traced him to Shahpur, 73 kms away from Mumbai.

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Organ Racket in National Capital busted

SAUMYA SHUKLA ■ NEW DELHI

India's emergence as a global medical tourism hub in recent times has been marred by several cases of organ theft, raising concerns among agencies and Ministries about blow to the country's reputation. To combat this menace, the Centre recently issued advisories for international patients.

India's growing popularity as a premier medical tourism destination is evident from the influx of approximately 2 million patients from 78 countries each year, seeking medical, wellness, and IVF treatment. This booming



Delhi Police Crime Branch personnel with men arrested for their alleged involvement in an organ transplant racket exposed by them, in New Delhi, on Tuesday. The Crime Branch arrested seven people, including a doctor

PTI

industry currently generates \$6 billion annually which is projected to soar to \$13 billion by 2026, bolstered by the Indian Government's ambitious ‘Heal in India’ initiative, according to the CII (Confederation of Indian Industry).

However, with no let-up in incidents of organ thefts, the health tourism industry faces a serious threat.

The latest being a major organ donation transplant racket running in Delhi-NCR region with links to Bangladesh busted by the Crime Branch of Delhi Police.

According to the Delhi Police on Tuesday, a total of seven people, including a Delhi-based doctor

and the racket's Bangladeshi kingpin, have been arrested. Acting on a tip-off, the Crime Branch had been working on the case for two months.

A majority of the donors and recipients are from Bangladesh brought to India on the basis of the fake documents for the surgeries.

Former National Organ and Tissue Transplant Organisation (NOTTO) Head Dr Vimal Bhandari, while talking about the issue of such rackets, said the onus of cross-checking the documents of the patient and the donor to ensure that such incidents do not happen lies on the authorisation committee.

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Bypolls in 13 Assembly seats of seven States today

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Bypolls to 13 assembly constituencies in seven states on Wednesday will decide the fate of many veterans and some debutantes including Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu's wife Kamlesh Thakur.

The assembly seats going to polls are Raiganj, Ranaghat Dakshin, Bagda and Manikatala (West Bengal); Badrinath and Manglaur (Uttarakhand); Jalandhar West (Punjab); Dehra, Hamirpur and Nalagarh (Himachal Pradesh); Rupauli (Bihar); Vikravandi (Tamil Nadu) and Amarwara (Madhya Pradesh). The bypolls are to be held against vacancies created either due to deaths or resignation of incumbent members.

In West Bengal, the stakes are high for both the ruling TMC, which is looking to capitalise on its improved performance in the Lok Sabha polls, and the BJP, which is seeking to leverage the significant leads it made in the four constituencies in the parliamentary polls.

The TMC won Manikatala seat in the 2021 West Bengal elections while the BJP won

Raiganj, Ranaghat Dakshin and Bagda. Later, the BJP MLAs switched to the TMC. The Manikatala bypoll was necessitated by the death of sitting TMC MLA Sadhan Pandey in February 2022. The TMC has fielded Pandey's wife Supti from the seat. The ruling party has fielded Krishna Kalyani from Raiganj and Mukut Mani Adhikari from Ranaghat Dakshin. In Badgah, a Matua-majority constituency, the TMC has fielded Madhuparna Thakur, a member of the Matua Thakurbari and daughter of party Rajya Sabha MP Mamatabala Thakur. Kalyani, Adhikari and Biswajit Das had unsuccessfully contested the Lok Sabha polls on TMC tickets after resigning from the BJP. The BJP has fielded All India Football Federation president Kalyan Chaubey from Manikatala, Manoj Kumar Biswas from Ranaghat Dakshin, Binay Kumar Biswas from Bagdah and Manas Kumar Ghosh from Raiganj. Buoyed by its Lok Sabha poll performance, the TMC hopes to win all four assembly seats. "We are confident of winning all four assembly seats. The people of Bengal have rejected the BJP in the last Lok Sabha polls," said TMC leader Kunal



Ghosh. The TMC won 29 of the 42 Lok Sabha seats in West Bengal, up from 22 in the 2019 parliamentary polls. On the other hand, the BJP's tally came down to 12 from 18 in 2019. In Himachal Pradesh, bypolls will be held for three assembly constituencies -- Dehra, Hamirpur and Nalagarh. The seats fell vacant after the three independent legislators Hoshiyar Singh (Dehra), Ashish Sharma (Hamirpur) and KL Thakur (Nalagarh), who had voted in favour of the BJP in the Rajya Sabha polls held on February 27, resigned from the House on March 22. The BJP has fielded

the three former Independent MLAs from their respective seats after they joined the party. A total of 13 candidates are contesting the bypolls in the three segments with 2,59,340 voters. The Congress' pick in Dehra is Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu's wife Kamlesh Thakur. She will take on BJP's Hoshiyar Singh, one of the nine MLAs who had voted against the Congress candidate in the Rajya Sabha polls. "Vote for the CM and not the MLA. Now, Dehra will also become the constituency of the CM," Kamlesh Thakur told people while canvassing implying that voting for her

meant voting for the CM and hence "development". "I will not need to go to the Secretariat to get your work done, I will get it done from the chief minister at home," she said. In Hamirpur, the home district of Sukhu, former Independent MLA Ashish Sharma is pitted against Congress' Puspender Verma. Former Independent legislator KL Thakur is facing old rival Hardeep Singh Bawa of the Congress in Nalagarh. The entry of BJP dissident Harpreet Saini, who is contesting as an Independent, has made the contest triangular. The BJP got a lead in all three assembly constituencies during the recently held Lok Sabha polls. Neighbouring Uttarakhand's Manglaur constituency will also witness a three-cornered fight. The bypoll was necessitated by the death of sitting BSP MLA Sarwat Karim Ansari in October last year. The BJP has never won the Muslim and Dalit-dominated Manglaur seat which has been held either by the Congress or the BSP in the past. This time, the BSP has fielded Ansari's son Ubudur Rehman against Congress nominee Qazi Mohammad

Nizamuddin. Gujar leader and BJP nominee Kartar Singh Bhadana is also in the fray. Polling will also be held for the Badrinath assembly bypoll. The seat fell vacant after sitting Congress MLA Rajendra Bhandari resigned and switched to the BJP in March this year. Badrinath will witness a direct fight between BJP's Rajendra Bhandari and Congress newcomer Lakhpat Singh Butola. Traditionally, the party in power in the state has an edge over its rivals in bypolls. Of the 15 bypolls held in Uttarakhand since its creation, 14 were won by the party in power. In Punjab, the bypoll to the Jalandhar West assembly segment is being seen as a litmus test for Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann, who has pulled out all the stops to register a win after the party's drubbing in the Lok Sabha polls. The seat, which fell vacant after Sheetal Angural resigned as AAP legislator, is witnessing a multi-cornered fight. Fifteen candidates are in the fray for the by-election while there are a total of 1.72 lakh voters who are eligible to cast their votes. The ruling AAP has fielded Mohinder Bhagat, the son of former

minister and former BJP MLA Bhagat Chunni Lal. Bhagat had joined the AAP after quitting the BJP last year. The Congress has placed its bet on Surinder Kaur, who is the former senior deputy mayor and five-time municipal councillor in Jalandhar. She is a prominent Dalit leader of the Ravidassia community. The BJP has fielded Angural, who switched sides in March after quitting the AAP. He had won this seat in the 2022 Punjab assembly polls on an AAP ticket. Winning the bypoll is important for Mann as his party faced a drubbing in the recently concluded Lok Sabha polls, winning only three of the 13 seats. Mann led the AAP's campaign for the bypoll and canvassed for Bhagat by holding public meetings and roadshows. He rented a house in Jalandhar and moved there along with his family and had said he would keep the house even after the bypoll. Prestige is also at stake for the BJP which also wants to emerge victorious in the Jalandhar West seat after drawing a blank in the 2024 Lok Sabha polls. The counting of votes for the bypolls will be held on July 13.

GNDU Hindi Department holds special lecture



PNS ■ AMRITSAR

The Department of Hindi of the Guru Nanak Dev University organised an enlightening lecture as part of their ongoing lecture series in the department. The special guest speaker for the event was Dr Vartika Nanda, Professor, prison reformer, and Head of the Journalism department at Lady Shri Ram College in Delhi. With her vast experience in journalism, Dr Nanda brought a unique perspective captivating everyone present as she delved into various aspects of society, literature, and various aspects of journalism from a Hindi language perspective. Her insights shed light on the importance of language in shaping public discourse and understanding societal issues.

Vijayan vulnerable as more comrades go against him

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

Since the day he was elected as the Secretary of the Kerala CPI (M) in 1998, a post which had occupied till 2015 and he was elevated to the post of the Chief Minister in 2016, Pinarayi Vijayan was the monarch of everything he surveyed. The whole Kerala and the CPI (M)'s central leadership danced to his tunes till the results of the 2024 Lok Sabha election were announced. The CPI (M) had to contend with just one out of the 15 seats it contested. Though the results of the 2019 election too were on the



same lines, there was nobody to question the supremacy of Vijayan either in the party or in the Government. Things have changed a lot over the last one month as even former ministers like Thomas Issac (who had grand plans for the economy of the country as he

had hoped to be appointed as the Union Finance Minister in the eventuality of the INDI alliance winning the election) and MA Baby questioning the leadership qualities of Vijayan, something which was considered as unthinkable even a month back. While Issac chose to attack Vijayan through innuendoes, Baby's article appeared in the latest edition of "Pachakkuthira" a magazine owing allegiance to the Church. Baby said that if the leadership fails to listen to the party cadre and rectify itself, there is no future for the Left

parties in the country. He also pointed out that the Left which controlled the Central Government once is at its lowest ebb now. According to Issac, it was the arrogance and contempt of the people in power which cost the CPI (M) the 2024 Lok Sabha polls. Both Issac and Baby, known as the glamour stars of the CPI (M) are known critics of Vijayan and his son -in-law Mohammed Riyaz, the minister for PWD and Tourism. Riyaz, the second husband of Vijayan's daughter Veena is the de facto number two in the council of ministers.

Hathras A Conspiracy?

From Page 1

The lawyer of the 'godman' on July 6 claimed "some poisonous substance" sprayed by "some unidentified men" triggered the stampede. The investigation committee also found the event organisers and the tehsil-level police and administration guilty. It said the local SDM, circle officer, tehsildar (revenue official), inspector, and outpost in charge were guilty of negligence in discharging their duties. "The Sub-District Magistrate of Sikandraraui granted permission for the event without inspecting the venue and did not even inform the senior officials," the report said, adding the official did not take the event seriously. The SIT recommended action against the concerned officials posted in Sikdandararai, including the SDM, circle officer, SHO Sikandraraui police station, tehsildar, and police outpost in charge of Kachora and

Pora.

"The organisers took permission to organise the programme by hiding facts. The conditions applicable for permission were not followed. The organisers did not make adequate and smooth arrangements by inviting an unexpected crowd. Nor were the conditions of permission given by the local administration for the program followed," the SIT report said. People associated with the organising committee have been found guilty of creating chaos, it said, adding that they engaged volunteers without proper police verification. "The organising committee misbehaved with the police. An attempt was made to stop the local police from inspecting the event venue," it said. The Satsangkartar or preacher (bhole baba) was allowed to meet the crowd without any security arrangements, it said.

Organ Racket...

From Page 1

"An authorisation committee which has six to seven members including the medical superintendent as its chairman calls both the donor and the patient to cross-check all the documents. If any problem arises the matter is forwarded to the ministry," he said, adding that the process happens on record. "Thus the onus to make sure that such cases do not happen lies with the authorisation committee," said the former chief of National Organ and Tissue Transplant Organisation. Elaborating on the case, DCP Crime Branch Amit Goel said, "On June 16, secret and credible information was received from reliable sources about the members of a well organised crime syndicate, who are involved in illegal kidney transplants. The information was further developed and on June 16, on specific information, a raid was conducted by a

team at Jasola Village." He added that four accused persons, namely Rasel, the kingpin, Rokon, Sumon Miya, all natives of Bangladesh and Ratesh Pal, also hailing from Bangladesh were apprehended. During interrogation, they confessed that they targeted the patients suffering from kidney disease hailing from Bangladesh by visiting the dialysis centres in Bangladesh. "They arranged the donor from Bangladesh, taking advantage of their poor financial background and exploiting them on the pretext of providing them a job in India," Goel stated. The accused used to confiscate their passports after they reached India. Thereafter, the accused prepared the forged documents of patients/donors to show the relationship between them as this is mandatory that only the close relative can be a donor.

We should together strengthen education ecosystem: Pradhan

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan on Tuesday called upon states to work with the Centre as a team to strengthen the education ecosystem and replicate and amplify the best practices across all states and Union Territories (UTs). The minister made the comments at a review meeting of the Ministry of Education's Department of School Education and Literacy with states and (UTs). The meeting focused on implementation of the new National Education

Policy (NEP) and alignment of the ministry's flagship schemes such as the Samagra Shiksha, PM SHRI, PM Poshan and ULLAS with the policy. "Both states and the Centre have to work as a team to strengthen the education ecosystem as well as to replicate and amplify the best practices across all states and UTs. All stakeholders should work cohesively for strengthening capacities, building a collaborative education system and leveraging education as the key pillar of Viksit Bharat (developed India)," Pradhan said.

MODI'S MOSCOW HUG

From Page 1 Putin thanked Modi for trying to help find a peaceful solution to the Ukraine crisis. "I am grateful to you for the attention you pay to the most pressing issues, particularly trying to find ways to resolve the Ukraine crisis, primarily through peaceful means," Putin was quoted as saying by the official TASS news agency. Putin made the statement during his talks with Modi here at the Kremlin, it said. Putin noted that Russia and India worked closely on the international stage. "We closely cooperate on the international stage, namely through international organisations," Putin was quoted as saying by the state-run TASS news agency. He specified that cooperation was underway "primarily within the UN and groups such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation and BRICS." "Yesterday, we had the opportunity to communicate in an informal atmosphere and talk about almost all the issues," Putin said.

He also said he believes that Moscow and New Delhi maintain a privileged strategic partnership. "Our countries have enjoyed decades of good friendship," he said. "Today, our relations have the nature of a privileged strategic partnership," he added. The Russian leader expressed satisfaction with growing trade between the two countries which he said saw a 66 per cent increase last year "and rose by another 20 per cent in the first quarter of this year." Earlier in the day, Prime Minister Modi paid tributes at the "Tomb of the Unknown Soldier" in Moscow. He also laid a wreath at the Tomb. The "Tomb of the Unknown Soldier" is a war memorial located at the Kremlin wall, Moscow. It is dedicated to the Soviet soldiers who lost their lives during World War II. As regards the award, Modi was conferred the 'Order of St Andrew the Apostle' award by Russian President Vladimir Putin for exceptional services in promoting bilateral ties between the two countries.

Relief eludes Kejriwal...

From Page 1 Subsequently, Kejriwal faced another setback as he was detained by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) shortly after. The AAP National Convenor currently finds himself in judicial custody concerning the CBI and ED cases. It has alleged that Kejriwal was the "kingpin and key conspirator" of the excise "scam" and was "vicariously responsible" for it. Reacting to the development Delhi BJP President Virendra Sachdeva called the development "very serious". Demanding the resignation of Kejriwal, he said, "Though Arvind Kejriwal should have shown moral courage to resign when his government's name first cropped up in liquor scam but after today's court's cognizance and summoning he has lost all

authority to continue as Chief Minister." While AAP national secretary Pankaj Gupta alleged that the BJP-led Centre is hatching a "big conspiracy" against AAP, Gupta also accused the BJP of wanting to finish off AAP, which governs Punjab and Delhi, at any cost. ED's intention from the very beginning of this fake investigation was to frame AAP, arrest all its top leaders and crush the party. BJP sees AAP as the biggest threat in the future and has deployed ED and CBI to ensure AAP is finished. Over the last two years of this investigation, ED and CBI have framed a false case in the courts while BJP has run a false narrative in public against AAP and its leaders," the AAP said in a statement.

Delhi drowns...

From Page 1

Ironically, the stretch near the Civic Centre building in Minto road was waterlogged. It was also witnessed in several areas including Sadar Bazar underpass, Jangpura, Mandoli, Sangam Vihar, Najafgarh, Burari, Durga Vihar, Laxmi nagar, ITO, Delhi Cantt, Palam, Dilshad garden, Gol market, Greater Kailash, Kishanganj, Sarai Rohilla and outside Central Secretariat Metro Station among others. Meanwhile, the Delhi BJP demanded the city government to call an all-party meeting within 24 hours on the cleaning of drains and monsoon preparedness or threatened the AAP to be ready to face BJP's protest. Further, the Delhi Traffic Police on X (formerly Twitter) said, "Movement of

traffic has been restricted at Azad Market underpass in the carriageway from Azad Market towards Shastri Nagar due to waterlogging." In another post, the police said the traffic movement was affected on the Windsor Palace roundabout in front of Ashoka road from C-Hexagon due to damage of sewerage pipeline. "Traffic is affected on Rohtak Road in both the carriageways from Rajdhani Park towards Mundka and vice-versa due to waterlogging. Kindly plan your journey accordingly," the police said on their X handle. The rain also hit traffic movement on MB Road in both the carriageways from Khanpur, Sant Nagar main market, from Dhaula Kuan to Mahipalpur, Paschim Vihar, at tis Hazari red light, on Rani Jhansi Road, and near Jhandewalan, Mundka traffic signal among others. The Air Quality Index (AQI) was recorded in the 'satisfactory' category with a reading of 76 at 9 am, according to Central Pollution Control Board data.

One of the commuters said the traffic was massive on the Delhi-Meerut expressway near Sarai Kale Khan. Another said the traffic was heavy on the stretch from Wazirabad flyover to the Kashmere Gate ISBT. Others said the traffic was heavy under Savitri flyover, from Mahipalpur till Rangpuri signal, on Nizamuddin bridge under metro bridge, at MB road Sangam Vihar to Khanpur, Sant Nagar main market, from Dhaula Kuan to Mahipalpur, Paschim Vihar, at tis Hazari red light, on Rani Jhansi Road, and near Jhandewalan, Mundka traffic signal among others. The Air Quality Index (AQI) was recorded in the 'satisfactory' category with a reading of 76 at 9 am, according to Central Pollution Control Board data.

Weather forecasting to get tech...

From Page 1

Hence, the quality of data is quite important. We are adding networks but the speed we are adding is very slow and hence we are not getting the required amount of quality data for a pinpointed prediction." Accurate weather predictions play a vital role in saving lives by providing early warnings of storms, heatwaves, and other natural disasters. Farmers rely on forecasts for agricultural planning, while energy sector operators use them to manage heating, cooling, and renewable energy production efficiently. Aviation and maritime sectors also depend on accurate forecasts for safe operations.

Jammu terror trail: Shocking incursions

From Page 1 Meanwhile, the mortal remains of the martyred soldiers identified as Nb Sub Anand Singh, Hav Kamal Singh, Nk Vinod Singh, Rfn Anuj Negi & Rfn Adarsh Negi were dispatched to their native places after paying homage to them at the wreath-laying ceremony in the Western Command. The Spokesperson of the Indian Army in a post on X (earlier Twitter) said, "Chief of Army Staff General Upendra Dwivedi and all Ranks of the Indian Army salute the supreme sacrifice of Bravehearts who laid down their lives in the line of duty. Indian Army offers its deepest condolences and stands firm with the bereaved families in this

hour of grief". The Chief Commander of the Indian Armed Forces, President Droupadi Murmu Tuesday termed the terrorist attack on an Army convoy in Jammu and Kashmir a "cowardly act" and said it deserved condemnation and firm counter-measures. In a post on X, Murmu said, "My sympathies are with the families of the bravehearts who laid down their lives in this ongoing war against terror in its all forms. I pray for the speedy recovery of those injured." Defence Minister Rajnath Singh also reacted to the terror attack on Tuesday, Singh said he was "deeply anguished" over the death of five Army personnel in a terrorist attack in Jammu and

Kashmir's Kathua district. Singh said counter-terror operations are underway and the soldiers are determined to "usher in peace and order" in the region. Extending deepest condolences to the bereaved families Defence Secretary Giridhar Aramane said, "Their selfless service to the nation will always be remembered and their sacrifice will not go unavenged and India will defeat the evil forces behind the attack." Aramane's remarks were shared on 'X' by a spokesperson of the Defence Ministry. Meanwhile, angry residents and political workers hit the streets across Jammu as India woke up to the gory images

of blood-stained army vehicles in which the soldiers were traveling at the time of the ambush. Lawyers from the Jammu Bar Association held a protest against the terror attack on an army patrol in Kathua, calling it an act of cowardice by Pakistan-based terrorists. Media teams were permitted to visit the ambush site on Tuesday to capture the telltale signs of mayhem on ground zero. On their arrival, the media teams witnessed the spot where the entire road stretch was littered with bloodstains, empty bullet cartridges, army vehicles with shattered windscreens and flattened tyres. The tarpaulin sheet, used to cover the rear portion of the army truck,

was also full of perforations and was torn apart. Preliminary reports suggested before opening indiscriminate firing from different directions on the army trucks the terrorists also lobbed grenades to distract the truck drivers. A villager Puran Chand Sharma, who runs a shop in the area told media persons, "A civil bus passed the road about 10 minutes before the attack. We heard a loud explosion and initially took it as a tyre burst but the subsequent heavy firing made us realize that an encounter had started." The heavy firing continued till 5 pm followed by intermittent firing for another hour. "About 12 villagers were at my shop. We

hid ourselves inside to avoid getting caught in the crossfire. After the firing stopped, we rushed to help evacuate the casualties," he said. Vijay Kumar, another local, said this is the first terror incident in the village since cross-border terrorism broke out in Jammu and Kashmir over three decades ago. Till the time of filing the report, another encounter broke out between the security forces and the terrorists in the Doda district on Tuesday. A police spokesman said, "An encounter broke out between terrorists and security forces in Goli-Gadi forests in the upper reaches of Doda district. More details to follow".

BJP demands meet on monsoon preparedness

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi BJP President Virendra Sachdeva demanded the city government to call an all-party meeting within 24 hours on the cleaning of drains and monsoon preparedness or threatened the AAP to be ready to face BJP's protest. Sachdeva, along with former Delhi Minister Arvinder Singh Lovely, questioned the preparations of the AAP regarding the waterlogging caused by just 15 to 20 minutes of rain in Delhi and said that the rain once again exposed the shortcomings of the AAP government in Delhi. The state BJP chief showed videos of waterlogging in various parts of Delhi after just 20 minutes of rain, stating that hundreds of crores are being squandered in the name of cleaning drains by the Delhi government's Jal Board, Public Works Department, Flood Department, and Delhi Municipal Corporation. "Minister Atishi and Mayor Dr. Shelly Oberoi, were constantly claiming that Delhi is prepared for rains now but all claims were proven hollow by just a few minutes of rain. Areas like I.T.O., Sangam Vihar, Burari, Deoli, Kishanganj, Chanderawal, Rajendra Nagar, and Najafgarh, which experienced significant waterlogging on June 28 and July 3, were once again submerged in just a few minutes of rain," he said. He stated, "Only scams are



happening in the name of cleaning drains in Delhi, and the Delhi government should call an all-party meeting within 24 hours on the cleaning of drains and monsoon preparedness or be ready to face BJP's protest." Sachdeva added that if work had been done honestly, Delhi wouldn't be in this situation today. Out of 750 drains, only around 150 have been cleaned, but the silt removed from them has not been lifted, so it has flowed back into the drains after the rain. He pointed out that people have lost their lives in the last two rains. "It's unfortunate for Delhi to have a government

with an insensitive Chief Minister today," he claimed. Hitting at the AAP, Lovely said, "Delhi has become a city where residents suffer year-round with water shortages in summer, waterlogging during rains, and pollution in winter. If Minister Atishi and the Mayor Dr. Oberoi had spent as much time working as they did holding press conferences, the situation might have been better today." He further stated, "The Chief Minister of Delhi is in jail today, and they keep claiming to run the government from jail, but the crucial and powerful Apex Committee of the Flood Department, which he chairs, has not held its meet-

ing on time this year in January." Lovely stated that all ministers of Delhi, along with all MLAs whose constituencies fall in low-lying areas, are members of this committee. "This committee works to prevent waterlogging during floods and monsoons. It has a broad scope of work and budget, but it's not being utilized in Delhi. The high-level committee meeting to prevent waterlogging in the city should be held in January, but this year, it was held in mid-June. If the meeting is held in June, what kind of preparations can be expected for July's waterlogging? This is a matter of concern," he alleged.

Mayor conducts comprehensive inspection of MCD control room



STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) Mayor Dr. Shelly Oberoi conducted a comprehensive inspection of the civic body's control room which was aimed at assessing the handling of complaints, bringing procedural efficiency, and bringing down resolution time by the officials. During the inspection, she was accompanied by IT Director Sumit Kumar and senior MCD representatives. Oberoi was briefed on the nature of complaints received by the MCD, with sanitation and water logging being the most common issues. "It was highlighted that these complaints are automatically forwarded to the respective zones for prompt action. The majority of complaints are resolved within 1-2 days after being reported. Notably, the

MCD officials take swift action to address water logging by deploying temporary pumps in the affected areas," a MCD official stated. Further, she was also informed that a total of 18,150 cleanliness complaints have been registered with MCD from June 1 until Tuesday, out of which approximately 80 per cent, which means 14,716 complaints, have been resolved. The Mayor emphasised the importance of citizen engagement and encouraged Delhi residents to register their complaints by calling 155305. She shared a few snippets from her visits, stating, "Today I inspected the control room of MCD-311 App and instructed the officers to improve the functioning to deal with complaints related to water logging and mosquitoes due to monsoon received on 311- App."

HC refuses to reject petition challenging election of AAP MLA in 2002 Assembly bypolls

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court has refused to reject a petition challenging the election of AAP MLA Durgesh Pathak in the 2002 assembly bypolls. The petition has challenged Pathak's election as a lawmaker from the Rajinder Nagar Assembly constituency here in the June 2022 bypolls on the grounds of indulging in corrupt practices. Pathak was declared as a winner from Rajinder Nagar constituency by defeating his nearest rival by a margin of 11,468 votes. The high court listed the election petition before roster bench on July 22 for further proceedings. Justice Yashwant Varma, in a 103-page order passed on Monday, dismissed the application of Pathak seeking rejection of the election petition filed against him, saying there was no justification to do so at this stage. "The Court is also conscious of the indubitable position in law that a petition cannot be rejected in part. Consequently, although we have found in favor of the applicant insofar as the office of profit, disclosure of ITR and overestimation of shareholding questions are concerned, we, in light of what has been noted in the context of Form 26, the question of whether a disclosure with respect to a FIR is required in law, the meaning

to be ascribed to the expression 'pending criminal case' are issues which are clearly triable. We consequently find no justification to reject the election petition at this stage and on that score," Justice Varma said in the order. The high court noted that "broad and sweeping allegations" have been made by Tewari alleging corrupt practice, undue influence and improper acceptance of a nomination. "It becomes evident and apparent that there is a manifest failure on the part of the election petitioner having asserted that the improper acceptance of the nomination or a corrupt practice or non-compliance with the provisions of the Constitution, Act, Rules or Orders made thereunder had materially affected the results of the election," it said. The court, however, said it was conscious of the indubitable position in law that a petition cannot be rejected in part. "In fact, and as was pointed out earlier, neither side had even brought those amendments to the notice of the Court. Much of the material which has been noticed in the preceding paragraphs has been independently collated by the Court and the ends of justice would thus warrant parties being placed on due notice lest prejudice be caused to either side," reads the order.

Restore bus marshalls' jobs, AAP urges LG

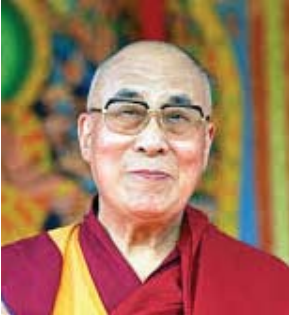
STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI



Kondli MLA Kuldeep Kumar also made an appeal and said that we once again request from the LG to restore the jobs of bus marshalls, so that they can provide their services to the people of Delhi. "When we passed the resolution on February 29, 2024, in the Delhi Assembly for the reinstatement of bus marshalls and sent it to the Lieutenant Governor, we hoped that the bus marshalls would be reinstated immediately," Kumar said. He added that the Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal was also sad while giving his statement in the House that the bus marshalls who were deployed by the Delhi government for the safety of the daughters and sisters of Delhi were also fired by LG without the permission of the Chief Minister or a minister.

HC dismisses PIL over alleged molestation of boy by Dalai Lama

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI



The Delhi High Court on Tuesday dismissed a public interest litigation over the alleged molestation of a boy by the Dalai Lama, as claimed to have been shown in a video clip that went viral last year, saying the religious leader was "being playful" and has already apologised for the incident. In the clip, the Dalai Lama was seen kissing the boy on the lips and asking him to "suck his tongue", which sparked a row on social media. The petitioner, 'Confederation of NGOs', urged the court to pass directions to the authorities to take cognisance of the alleged incident under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act and also ensure that the identity of the child is retracted from news portals. A bench headed by Acting Chief Justice Manmohan said the PIL can't be entertained and the incident was "not premeditated". "The court has seen the video and finds that it happened in

full public glare. The court finds it was the minor who expressed his desire and intent to meet and hug Respondent no. 4 (the Dalai Lama)," the court said. "If the video is seen in overall perspective, it can be seen that respondent no. 4 was being playful and trying to humour the child. It is to be seen in the context of the Tibetan culture. The fact that he is the head of a religious sect which is not on the best terms with a foreign power is also to be borne in mind while dealing with such petitions. "The court finds that the respondent no. 4 has already expressed an apology to those who may have been hurt," the bench, also comprising Justice Tushar Rao

Gedela, said. If someone is aggrieved, they can take appropriate legal action, said the court. The petitioner's counsel submitted that while she was not trying to "bring the Holiness under the scanner", the authorities should have issued a statement after taking note of the incident. Stating that parents, who are "mesmerized" by religious leaders, often take their children along, the petitioner prayed for a direction to "audit" all religious places, ashrams, retreats etc. It was also argued that if action is not taken, kissing minors on the lips would be normalised. The court remarked that the government will examine the issue and there was "nothing of public interest" in the matter. "There are gurus who kick people. We have seen that also. We can't get into all this. Next someone will say they got a bad handshake. Give it a quietus. This is not a case to carry on like this," the court said. "The present matter should not be entertained as public interest and the same is dismissed," it ordered.

IGI airport police register first case under BNS since its inception

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI



The Indira Gandhi International (IGI) airport police has registered its first case under the new criminal law Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita since its inception on July 1 as the team arrested two agents who promised to send a 22 year old man to Canada. "On July 1, one pax named Karminder Singh, hailing from Punjab, arrived at IGI Airport from Vietnam as a deportee. During scrutiny of his travel documents, one fake Canadian Visa was found affixed in his passport," DCP IGI Airport Usha Rangnani said, adding that a case under section 318(4), 336(3), 340(2) BNS was registered. On interrogation, he disclosed that many people of his village had gone to Canada to earn easy money. So he also decided to go there for a better livelihood and for earning quick money. "He got the mobile number of one agent namely Jagjeet Singh, alias Jaggi, through the internet, who promised to send him to Canada via Vietnam, in lieu of 24 lakhs. The pax further disclosed that he gave 10 lakhs in

cash to the agent Jaggi and 14 lakhs in cash to another agent namely Gurnam Singh on the directions of agent Jaggi," the DCP added. Singh deposited 14 lakhs in his bank accounts of HDFC and UCO banks and further transferred the same to agent Jagjeet Singh. "On June 28, he took flight from IGI Airport to Hanoi, Vietnam but at Hanoi Airport, his entry was restricted due to a fake Canadian Visa affixed in his passport and deported to India," Rangnani stated. One of the accused was arrested and on sustained interrogation, accused Gurnam Singh confessed his guilt and

disclosed that he has studied up to 12th class. Another agent, 32 year old Jagjeet Singh was formally arrested in the case as he was already in Judicial Custody after being arrested in a similar case this year. "During interrogation, he disclosed that he is a graduate and runs a company in the name of "True Talk Imagination" at Bijanur which deals in ticket booking and sending people abroad. During his work, he came in contact with some agents who used to cheat people on the pretext of sending them abroad and started working with them," the DCP said.

40,000 people shifted to hospitals in PCR units in past 15 months: Police

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

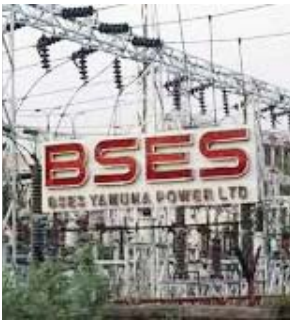


Delhi police on Tuesday shared data saying that more than 40,000 injured people were shifted to city hospitals by the PCR (police control room) unit in the past 15 months. As per the data, the PCR unit shifted 1,281 people in northwest, 1,887 people in Rohini, 3,481 people in north, 1,217 people in central, 1,034 in east, 2,359 in Shahdara, 1,384 in New Delhi, 2,121 people in south west, 3,036 in south district, and 3,023 people in southwest district. "PCR unit is the first responder to any emergency situation. Since April 1, 2023, to July 7, our PCRs shifted 40,371 people to different hospitals in the city. A total of 4,293 people were shifted to hospitals in outer north district, followed by 4,121 in the north east district," Deputy Commissioner of Police (PCR) Anand Kumar Mishra said. The officer said the staff of the PCR is fully trained and always ready to help people in emergency situations. "Our staffs are fully trained to give cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), they are loaded with different equipments to provide first-aid initially and they even go under training to

times reach hospitals in time so that their lives could be saved. Besides this, the PCR unit has apprehended 128 criminals, traced 984 missing children and recovered 1,423 stolen vehicles, the data said. The unit has also rescued 42 people from different situations, shifted 17 pregnant women to hospitals and saved 102 wildlife. Another senior police officer said that a large number of injured persons succumb due to delay in receiving treatment. "PCR unit (of Delhi Police) is trying their best to save human lives by shifting them to nearby hospitals during the golden hour (the first hour)," the police officer said.

BSES urges consumers to exercise caution while dealing with payment requests

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI



Have you ever received a frantic call or text threatening to cut off your power due to an overdue bill? You're not alone. Flagging this serious issue, BSES has urged its consumers to stay vigilant and exercise utmost caution when dealing with payment requests and only use bonafide BSES authorized platforms to make payment of their electricity bills. It also said officials will never ask consumers for their bank or credit/debit card details, CVV number, or OTP. Sources said electricity bill scams are a growing problem across India, targeting unsuspecting consumers with fake threats and phishing tactics. Recently, a doctor in Delhi became a victim of this growing cyber fraud. Clicking on a fake link supposedly to pay his electricity bill, he was duped of Rs 6 lakh. This was not an isolated case. These scams are not limited to a single city. From Delhi to major metros across the country, fraudsters are employing similar tactics. They send messages claiming overdue payments and urging unsuspecting people to click

on dubious links or call unfamiliar numbers. These links often lead to malware-infested websites, while the phone calls connect you to imposters posing as official representatives. Their goal? To steal consumer's personal and financial information, potentially leading to significant financial losses. The hallmark of these scams is urgency. The messages typically warn of immediate power cuts due to unpaid bills. They may even include official-looking logos and language to create a sense of legitimacy. Here's how the scam unfolds: BSES is regularly conducting campaigns using social media platforms, RWA meets and other below the lines activities to raise consumer awareness about the importance of vigilance against such frauds.

As part of this initiative, consumers are being informed on how to pay their electricity bills safely. Safety tips are as follows: *Never click on unknown links or call suspicious numbers received on SMS/ email *Never download unknown or suspicious applications/software on somebody's instructions for making your electricity bill payment *Never follow "step-by-step" instructions given by somebody over the phone, email, or message to make your electricity bill payment. *Never share Team Viewer, OTP, or any other personal information with anybody claiming to be an electricity official while making your bill payment *Never pay via unknown apps or to suspicious phone numbers or links. Only use authorized payment options as specified by the power disc-com *Remain alert and pay your electricity bills only through bonafide platforms If you suspect that you have received a fraudulent message or fallen victim to a scam, it is crucial to act quickly. Report the incident to the dis-com and local authorities or cybercrime cell immediately.

₹5 crore penalty imposed on realtor

PARVESH SHARMA ■ GURUGRAM



The Real Estate Regulatory Authority (RERA), Gurugram, has imposed a heavy penalty of Rs 5 crore on city-based real estate promoter M/s Vatika Limited for a serious violation of Section 3 (1) of the Real Estate (Regulation and Development) Act 2016. The Authority observed that M/s Vatika Limited obtained a licence for its residential real estate project M/s Vatika India Next way back in 2013 from the Town and Country Planning (TCP) Department of Haryana and the promoter had to apply for RERA registration within three months of the notification of the Act in the state in 2017. The Authority said that Vatika Limited applied for the RERA registration five years after the Haryana notification in 2022 after RERA took a suo motu action in the matter. Arun Kumar, Chairman of RERA Gurugram, said, "It was an ongoing project, and the promoter should have applied for the RERA registration well on time to avoid penalties. RERA registration is mandatory for all on-going real estate projects where competition certificates were not issued

before the Act came into force in 2016." Section 3 (1) of the Act 2016 says, "No promoter shall advertise, market, book, sell or offer for sale or invite persons to purchase in the any manner any plot, apartment, or building, as the case may be, in any real estate project or part of it, in any planning area, without registering the real estate project with the Real Estate Regulatory Authority established under the Act." Thereafter, once the promoter submitted all the mandatory approvals for registration of the project, the Authority approved the registration of the project. Further, the Authority also concluded the penal proceeding for violation of Section 3 which is a punishable offence u/s 59 of the Act 2016 and imposed a penalty of Rs 5 crore.

Modi in Moscow: Amid dip in global temperature

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE/AGENCIES ■ NEW DELHI/MOSCOW

Underlining the time tested ties between two countries, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday described Russia as India's "all-weather friend" and hailed President Vladimir Putin's leadership in strengthening the bilateral relationship over the past two decades. He termed Russia as "Sukh-dukh ka saathi."

He also announced that India has decided to open two new consulates in Kazan and Yekaterinburg cities of Russia in a bid to further boost travel and trade with the country. India currently has two consulates in Russia at St Petersburg and Vladivostok.

The Prime Minister's praise of Putin, during an address to the Indian diaspora in Moscow, came amid attempts by Western powers to isolate the Russian leader over the war in Ukraine. "On hearing the word Russia, the first word that comes to mind of every Indian is India's all-weather friend (sukh-dukh ka saathi) and a trusted ally," Modi said.

"No matter how low the temperature dips below minus during Russian winter,



India-Russia friendship has always remained in 'plus', it is full of warmth. This relationship is built on the strong foundation of mutual trust and mutual respect," the Prime Minister said.

Modi said he had a special appreciation for "his friend" President Putin for steering India-Russia friendship to greater heights over the last two decades. The Prime Minister said for a long time the world had seen an "influence-oriented global order." "But, what the world needs right now is confluence not influence and no one can deliver this message better than India which has a strong tradition of worshipping confluences," Modi said.

The Prime Minister said India was undergoing a transformation and the pace of development over the past 10 years has taken the world by surprise. Modi said India was changing as it believes in the strength of its 140 crore citizens who are now dreaming of turning their resolve of 'Viksit Bharat' into reality.

"Today's India is full of self-confidence, unlike the situation before 2014, and this is our biggest capital," Modi said. "When people like you bless us, even the biggest goals can be achieved. You all know that today's India achieves whatever goal it sets its mind to," the prime minister said.

The Prime Minister said it

was in his DNA to challenge all the challenges and India will write a new chapter of global growth in coming years.

Modi said it was exactly a month ago that he took oath as prime minister for the third consecutive term when he had made the resolve to work at thrice the strength and speed to fulfill the aspirations of the country.

"Our government envisions making India the world's third-largest economy, build three crore homes for the poor and turn three crore poor women in villages to 'lakhpati didi'," the Prime Minister said amid chants of 'Modi, Modi' and 'Modi hai toh mumkin hai'. "In several goals of the government number three has assumed significance," he said.

He said India was the country which sent Chandrayaan to a place on the moon where no country has gone before and has given the world the most reliable model for digital transactions. "India's development of the past 10 years was just a trailer, we will see much faster growth in the next 10 years," Modi said.

As regards opening the new consulates, the Prime Minister made the announcement of the opening of new

consulates at Kazan and Yekaterinburg while addressing the Indian diaspora here during his two-day visit to Russia. "I want to share some good news with you all. We have decided to open new consulates in Kazan and Yekaterinburg. This will enhance travel and business trade," Modi said.

Yekaterinburg is Russia's fourth largest city which has emerged as an important economic centre. The city had hosted four FIFA World Cup matches in 2018 when the sporting event was held in Russia.

Located on the confluence of the Volga and Kazanka rivers, Kazan is a cultural and educational hub and an emerging economic centre in Russia. Russia will also host the BRICS Summit in October in Kazan.

Modi on Monday began a high-profile visit to Russia for the 22nd India-Russia annual summit with President Vladimir Putin, his first trip since the start of Moscow's invasion of Ukraine.

The prime minister, after concluding his engagements in Russia, will, on July 9, leave for Austria on the first visit by an Indian Prime Minister to that country in over 40 years.

Moscow agrees to repatriate all Indians operating as support staff to Russian military

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI/MOSCOW

Taking cognisance of India's call to end the recruitment of Indians as support staff to the Russian military, Russia has broadly heeded to this and also agreed to ensure repatriation of those still working in the force, sources said on Tuesday.

It is learnt that Moscow agreed to release the Indians after the issue was brought up by Prime Minister Narendra Modi during an informal meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin on Monday night. The Russian president hosted a private dinner for the Indian prime minister at the former's residence in Novo-Ogaryovo on the outskirts of Moscow late on Monday evening.

Modi on Monday began a two-day high-profile visit to Russia for the 22nd India-Russia annual summit with President Putin, his first trip since the start of Moscow's invasion of Ukraine.

Last month, Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said the issue of Indian nationals serving with the Russian Army remains a matter of "utmost concern" and demanded action from Moscow over it.



An announcement on Russia's decision to discharge all the Indians working as support staff to the Russian Army is expected to be made after summit talks between Modi and Putin on Tuesday. Russia has broadly agreed to our request on the issue, the sources said.

On June 11, India said two Indian nationals, who were recruited by the Russian Army, had been killed in the ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict, which took the number of such deaths to four.

Following the deaths of two Indians, the MEA demanded a "verified stop" to further recruitment of Indian nation-

als by the Russian Army.

In a strongly-worded statement, it said India demanded that there be a "verified stop to any further recruitment of Indian nationals by the Russian Army" and that such activities would not be in "consonance with our partnership."

Earlier in March, 30-year-old Hyderabad resident Mohammed Asfan succumbed to injuries sustained while serving with the Russian troops on the frontlines with Ukraine. In February, Hemal Ashwinbhai Mangua, a 23-year-old resident of Surat, died in a Ukrainian air strike while serving as a "security helper" in the Donetsk region.

Large-scale atrocities against Dalits in TN: Union Minister

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Union Minister L Murugan on Tuesday alleged large-scale atrocities were taking place against Dalits in Tamil Nadu and claimed that even political leaders were not safe in the state under the DMK government.

A delegation of the Tamil Nadu BJP unit, led by the party's state vice president VP Duraisamy, will approach the National Commission for Scheduled Castes and the National Human Rights Commission later in the day, urging them to take appropriate action in the matter, Murugan told a press conference at the BJP headquarters here. Senior leaders of the BJP Tamil Nadu unit, including Duraisamy, were present at the press conference.

"After the DMK came to power in May 2021, there has been a tremendous increase in the atrocities against Dalits in Tamil Nadu. A survey is telling that every year more than 2,000 cases of atrocities against



Dalits are filed in the state," Murugan said.

He referred to a series of incidents of alleged atrocities against Dalits since 2022 and some incidents of attack and murder of the BJP leaders in the state, putting the blame on the "complete failure" of Chief Minister MK Stalin.

"Recently, K Armstrong, a Dalit leader and BSP state president was murdered," he said, alleging that "even political leaders are not safe" in the state under the DMK rule. "Scheduled caste leaders and people do not have security. They are facing harassment under the DMK government," he said.

"A delegation of BJP Tamil Nadu unit, led by Duraisamy, is going to submit a memorandum to the National Commission for Scheduled Castes and National Human Rights Commission today in this connection, urging them to take appropriate action in the matter," the Union minister said.

Murugan said the DMK claims that it is the pioneer of social justice but the ruling party is not following the idea of social justice in the state.

"Stalin doesn't have the moral right to talk about social justice because of the incidents of atrocities against Dalits taking place in the state," he charged.

No open court hearing of same-sex marriage pleas: SC

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Tuesday refused to allow open court hearing of pleas seeking review of its last year's judgement declining legal recognition to same-sex marriage. In a setback to gay rights activists, a five judge constitution bench headed by Chief Justice DY Chandrachud had on October 17 last year refused to accord legal backing to same-sex marriage, saying there was "no unqualified right" to marriage with the exception of those that are recognised by law.

The apex court, however, had made a strong pitch for the rights of queer people so they don't face discrimination in accessing goods and services that are available to others, safe houses known as 'Garima Greh' in all districts to provide shelter to members of the community facing harassment and violence and dedicated hotline numbers which they could use in case of trouble. A five judge bench comprising the CJI and Justices Sanjiv Khanna, Hima Kohli, BV Nagarathna and PS



Narasimha are scheduled to consider in chambers the pleas seeking review of the judgement on July 10.

On Tuesday, senior advocates Abhishek Singhvi and NK Kaul mentioned the matter and urged the CJI to hear the review petitions in an open court.

"I say that if these petitions can be heard in the open court...", Kaul asked the court. These are the constitution bench review matters which are listed in chambers, the CJI told him. As per the practice, the review pleas are consid-

ered in chambers by judges. In its judgement, the bench had held that transgender people in heterosexual relationships have the freedom and entitlement to marry under the existing statutory provisions.

It had said an entitlement to legal recognition of the right to union, akin to marriage or civil union, or conferring legal status to the relationship can be only done through "enacted law".

The five-judge constitution bench headed by CJI Chandrachud had delivered

four separate verdicts on a batch of 21 petitions seeking legal sanction for same-sex marriages. All five judges were unanimous in refusing to accord legal recognition to same-sex marriage under the Special Marriage Act and observed it was within Parliament's ambit to change the law for validating such union.

While the CJI had written a separate 247-page verdict, Justice Sanjay Kishan Kaul (since retired) had penned a 17-page judgement in which he broadly agreed with Justice Chandrachud's views.

Justice S Ravindra Bhat (since retired), who authored an 89-page judgement for himself and Justice Hima Kohli, had disagreed with certain conclusions arrived at by the CJI including on applicability of adoption rules for queer couples. Justice PS Narasimha had said in his 13-page verdict that he was in complete agreement with the reasoning given and conclusions arrived at by Justice Bhat.

The judges were unanimous in holding that queerness is a natural phenomenon and not "urban or elite" occurrence. In

his judgement, the CJI had recorded the assurance by Solicitor General Tushar Mehta that the Centre will constitute a committee chaired by the Cabinet Secretary for the purpose of defining and elucidating the scope of entitlements of queer couples who are in a union. The LGBTQIA++ rights activists, who had won a major legal battle in 2018 in the Supreme Court which decriminalised consensual gay sex, had moved the apex court seeking validation of same-sex marriage and consequential reliefs such as rights to adoption, enrolment as parents in schools, opening of bank accounts and availing succession and insurance benefits.

Some of the petitioners had urged the apex court to use its plenary power, "prestige and moral authority" to push the society to acknowledge such a union which would ensure LGBTQIA++ lead a "dignified" life like heterosexuals. LGBTQIA++ stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex, pansexual, two-spirit, asexual and allied persons.

CBI arrests two more in NEET-UG paper leak case



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The CBI has arrested two more persons, including a candidate, from Patna in connection with the alleged leakage of NEET-UG paper, taking the total number of arrests by the agency to 11, officials said Tuesday.

NEET-UG aspirant Sunny who hails from Nalanda and father of another candidate Ranjit Kumar who is from Gaya have been arrested, they said.

The CBI has so far arrested eight persons in Bihar NEET-UG paper leak case and one each in connection with alleged manipulation in Gujarat's Latur and Godhra, and one from Dehradun in connection with general conspiracy, the officials said. The agency had earlier arrested principal and vice principal of Hazaribagh-based Oasis school in the case and two persons who allegedly pro-

vided safe premises to NEET candidates where burnt question papers were recovered by the Bihar Police.

The CBI, which is probing the alleged irregularities in the medical entrance exam, has registered six FIRs. The FIR from Bihar pertains to leakage of paper while the remaining from Gujarat, Rajasthan and Maharashtra are linked to impersonation of candidates and cheating.

The agency's own FIR on a reference from the Union Education Ministry pertains to a "comprehensive investigation" into the alleged irregularities in the examination. NEET-UG is conducted by the NTA for admissions to MBBS, BDS, AYUSH and other related courses in government and private institutions. This year, the exam was conducted on May 5 at 4,750 centres in 571 cities, including 14 abroad. More than 23 lakh candidates had appeared for the test.

Meet outlines steps to empower physically challenged persons

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Providing accessible infrastructure, employment opportunities, and education to people with disabilities is crucial for ensuring their full participation and inclusion in society, Rajesh Aggarwal, Secretary, Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPWD), Ministry of Social Justice, and Empowerment, said, stressing on diversity rather than disability with the nature of humanity.

He was speaking at the ASSOCHAM's 6th Conference on Empowering Persons with Disabilities through Accessible & Assistive Technology here on Tuesday. Aggarwal also emphasised the gathering to not help people PWD with charity purposes but include them with designated job profiles and not quota.

For enhancing education, he gave examples of use of devices such as braille displays, speech-to-text software, and adapted learning tools to facilitate learning. Providing necessary workplace accommodations such as ergonomic chairs, specialized keyboards, and software solutions to support productivity, he added.

Focused on the theme 'Innovation and Sustainable Solutions for Equal Opportunities,' the conference aligned with the vision of Viksit Bharat, aspiring to position India as a Global AT Hub. Driven by competitive manufacturing costs, sup-



porting government policies like Make in India, India can position itself as a key player in the global market, said the experts. A joint knowledge report "Accessibility for all: embracing digital transformation with universal design" prepared by ASSOCHAM and EY was also released at the event.

Anil Rajput, Chairperson of the ASSOCHAM National CSR Council said "According to the WHO, 16 per cent of the world's population, which is over a billion people, have some form of disability, and 80 per cent of these live in the developing countries. With mobility being a critical factor in the lives of PwDs, he urged automobile manufacturers to bring in the latest technologies in vehicles for disabled people that are being used in different parts of the world. Amit Singh, Partner, EY

stressed on collaboration among government and private sector to create sustainable solutions for civil society and reducing barriers to participation.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is revolutionizing the field of emerging technologies by augmenting assistive devices' capabilities, personalizing experiences, and boosting accessibility. The country has a significant portion of its population that have disabilities that require immediate attention and solutions, he added.

Dr. Sara Varughese of CBM India addressed the pressing need for socially inclusive infrastructure, while Dipendra Manocha of DAISY Forum of India advocated for government policies to support mass production of assistive devices, aiming to lower costs and broaden availability.

Congress attacks Centre on unemployment

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Modi government has only one mission and that is to "keep the youth jobless", Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge alleged on Tuesday in a scathing attack against the Centre on the issue of unemployment.

The Modi government may be refuting independent economic reports like the one by Citigroup on unemployment but how will it deny government data, Kharge asked in a lengthy social media post citing various reports.

"The truth is that Modi government is solely responsible for shattering the dreams of crores of youth in the last 10 years," he alleged. Kharge said the latest government data punctures the government's claims. According to NSSO's (National Sample Survey Office) Annual Survey of Unincorporated Sector Enterprises, in the manufacturing sector, 54 lakh jobs were lost in unincorporated units in the seven years between 2015 and 2023, he said.

"In 2010-11, 10.8 crore employees were employed in unincorporated, non-agricultural enterprises across India, which has become 10.96 crore in 2022-23 - that is, a marginal increase of only 16 lakh in 12 years," he said. Kharge cited the latest Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS), to state that the urban unemployment rate is at 6.7 per cent (Q4, FY24).



"Modi government beats the drum of employment generation in the Formal sector by showing EPFO data, but even if we assume that data to be true, it has seen a 10% decline in new jobs in 2023," he said.

A report by IIM Lucknow, after analysing government data, shows that unemployment growth, high unemployment among the educated, low participation of women in the workforce are prevalent in the country, Kharge said.

He said the Modi government rejects independent economic reports because they expose their "shameless attempt to whitewash".

According to the CMIE (Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy), the current unemployment rate in the country has reached 9.2 per cent, he said, adding that it is a whopping 18.5 per cent for women.

"According to the ILO report, 83% of the unemployed in the country are youth. According to the India Employment Report 2024, between 2012 and 2019, about 7 crore youth joined the labour force, but there was zero growth in

employment - only 0.01%!" he added.

The Congress chief also referred to the 2023 report from Azim Premji University to say that 42.3 per cent of graduates under the age of 25 in the country are unemployed. "According to the latest report of Citigroup, India needs 1.2 crore jobs annually, and even 7% GDP growth will not be able to create enough jobs for our youth. Under the Modi Govt, the country has achieved an average of only 5.8% as GDP growth," he said.

"Be it government jobs, or private sector, self-employment or unorganised sector - Modi government has only one mission 'Keep the youth jobless', Kharge said. The Congress, which has been attacking the government over the issue of unemployment, on Sunday cited the Citigroup report to allege that the Modi government had accentuated India's "unemployment crisis" with the decimation of job-creating MSMEs through the "Tughlakian demonetisation, a hastily rushed GST, and rising imports from China".

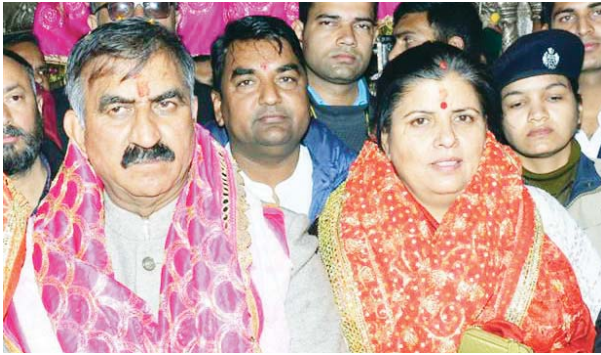
Dehra hypoll: Making poll debut, Sukhu's wife seeks votes in Himachal CM's name

PTI ■ SHIMLA

Vote for the CM and not the MLA. This is the slogan of Congress candidate Kamlesh Thakur, wife of Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu, who is making her debut in electoral politics from the Dehra Assembly seat.

Dehra is one of the three assembly constituencies besides Hamirpur and Nalagarh where bypolls will be held on Wednesday. The seats fell vacant after the three independent legislators -- Hoshiyar Singh (Dehra), Ashish Sharma (Hamirpur) and K L Thakur (Nalagarh) who had voted in favour of the BJP in the Rajya Sabha polls held on February 27 -- resigned from the House on March 22.

The BJP fielded all the three former independent MLAs from their respective seats after they joined the saffron party. A total of 13 candidates are contesting the bypolls in the three segments with 2,59,340 voters. While the by-elections would not make much difference in the House as the Congress has a majority with 38 out of 68 members and the BJP has 27 members, in Dehra, the prestige of the chief minister will be at stake as Kamlesh Thakur is taking



on Hoshiyar Singh -- one among the nine MLAs who voted against the Congress candidate in the Rajya Sabha polls.

"Vote for the CM and not the MLA. Now, Dehra will also become the constituency of the CM," Kamlesh Thakur told people while canvassing implying that voting for her meant voting for the CM and hence "development". "I will not need to go to the Secretariat to get your work done, I will get it done from the chief minister at home," said Kamlesh Thakur, who is pitted against two-time Independent MLA from Dehra and now BJP candidate Hoshiyar Singh. Dehra constituency was carved out after delimitation in 2012 and senior BJP leader and former minister Ravi Inder Singh was elected in 2012 as the MLA while

Hoshiyar Singh won as an Independent in the 2017 and 2022 assembly polls. The BJP gave a ticket to Hoshiyar Singh, ignoring the objections raised by former ministers Romesh Dhawala and Ravi Inder Singh, and set the stage for a virtual straight contest between the Congress and the BJP. The no-holds-barred campaigning was marred by mud-slinging and insinuations, vitiating the atmosphere. While Hoshiyar Singh has been attacking Sukhu, saying those who de-notified several educational, health and other institutions are talking of development, the Congress leaders have accused the three independents of "selling their souls" to the BJP and asking people to reject the 'sold out' leaders.

The Congress led by Sukhu also questioned why the MLAs resigned after 15 months and were now seeking re-election.

"There was no need for them to resign as Independent MLAs can support or oppose any party and even if they win, they would have to sit in the opposition," Sukhu said. He accused them of working for their own interests and not the people and alleged that the BJP, the Congress rebels and the Independent MLAs had hatched a conspiracy to topple the elected Congress government in the state. In the Hamirpur assembly segment, Ashish Sharma has crossed swords with Congress's Puspendra Verma who lost by a margin of 12,899 votes in the 2022 assembly polls. Hamirpur is the home district of Sukhu and the parliament constituency of former Union minister and BJP leader Anurag Thakur. Hamirpur assembly constituency has been a stronghold of the BJP. Of the 14 elections, including one by-election, held since 1967, the BJP and its earlier incarnation, the Jan Sangh and Janta Party won 10 while the Congress won three, including a by-election.

Modi's tree plantation campaign has become people's movement: Birla

PTI ■ INDORE

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla on Tuesday said by launching the "Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam" campaign, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has sent a message of adopting an environment-friendly lifestyle to the world battling climate change.

Birla said the plantation drive has become a people's movement across the country. The Speaker planted a sapling on the premises of the Border Security Force in the Bijasan area in Indore as part of the "Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam" campaign.

Former Lok Sabha Speaker Sumitra Mahajan and state cabinet minister Kailash Vijayvargiya were also present. Talking to reporters, Birla said, "The world is battling climate change, and to address these challenges, Prime Minister Modi has given a new message to the world to adopt an environment-friendly lifestyle and started the 'Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam' campaign." During the G20 Speakers' Summit in New Delhi last year, the countries of this global alliance resolved to make the initiative to adopt



an environment-friendly lifestyle a people's movement, he said. "Indore, the country's cleanest city, has taken a new initiative to plant 51 lakh saplings. With this, it will also become the greenest city in the country in the coming days," he said. According to officials, under the "Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam" campaign launched on June 5 on World Environment Day, 5.50 crore saplings will be planted across Madhya Pradesh, and of these, 51 lakh will be planted in Indore alone. The plantation drive in Indore will culminate on July 14.

Dharavi redevelopment project a big scam, says Prithviraj Chavan

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Senior Congress leader Prithviraj Chavan on Tuesday claimed the Dharavi slum redevelopment project in Mumbai was a "big scam" and demanded a white paper on it from the Maharashtra government.

Speaking in the Maharashtra assembly on budgetary demands of the revenue department, Chavan said the entire project will be scrapped once there is a change in government after the state assembly polls due in October. Dharavi is Mumbai's biggest slum cluster. The Congress and Shiv Sena (UBT), both part of the opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi, have been opposing the multi-billion dollar Dharavi redevelopment project being executed by the Adani group. "The Dharavi redevelopment project is a big scam and the state government should come out with a white paper, or else when the next government comes to power in October the entire project will be scrapped," Chavan said. The former state chief minister asked if the recent



handing over of a dairy land in Kurla for the Dharavi redevelopment project was mentioned in the original tender. There is no mention which government land is being given for Dharavi redevelopment...Whether it is Deonar, Mulund, salt pan land, he said. "This should be investigated as to how much government revenue loss is there," the Congress leader said. He claimed that government land was being given to industrialists at very low prices and all revenue entitled to the government has been waived. The multi-crore Dharavi slum redevelopment project involves no land transfer to the Adani group but to the Maharashtra government's departments.

Normal life disrupted in parts of coastal Karnataka due to torrential rain

PTI ■ MANGALURU
/UDUPI/SIRSI (KARNATAKA)

Normal life was disrupted in the coastal and Western Ghats districts of Dakshina Kannada, Udupi and Uttara Kannada following heavy to very heavy and incessant rains over the past few days, officials said.

Uttara Kannada district Collector K Lakshmi Priya said there was heavy rain in the coastal parts of the district on Monday and 313 people had taken shelter in eight care centres opened in Honnavar Taluk and they were provided with basic facilities.

As a result of the 'excess rain,' many low-lying areas in the undivided Dakshina Kannada (including Udupi) were flooded. However, on Monday there were no incidents of flooding inside Mangaluru city, but inundation was reported in lower parts of Bantwal town situated near the riverfront. Officials at Karnataka State Natural Disasters Monitoring Centre (KSNMDC) said they were closely monitoring this area and that a rescue team was on standby.

Meanwhile, in Uttara Kannada, 10,600 cusecs water was released from the four gates of the Kadra reservoir of Kali river on Monday, as the water level crossed the danger threshold. Incidentally, when 6,000 cusecs of water was released on Saturday, to relieve pressure off the overflowing Kali river, downstream villages of Kadra dam, Kadra, Mallapur, Kerodi, Baira Balani, Karga, Ulag and



Halaga were affected. Areas that witnessed torrential rains in Uttara Kannada on Monday were Sirsi, Siddapur and Yellapur, as well as parts of Malnad (ghats) area of Uttara Kannada. Many houses were flooded in Kadatoka area of Honnavar taluk and a team from National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) had to be deployed to rescue villagers. As rain water entered houses at many places in Udupi, people had to be rescued by firefighters in rubber dinghies. The worst affected areas were in Kalsanka, Bailakere, Mathadabettu, Gundibail, Padigaru and Sagri. Firefighters used rubber dinghies to ferry women, children and elderly persons to safety. In Uttara Kannada, Colonel Hill in Honnavar, a hillock on which one of the area's famous monuments, a British era column, stands, collapsed at places on National Highway 66. With heavy rainfall expected

according to the Met department, both Dakshina Kannada and Udupi districts issued an orange alert in their respective jurisdictions until July 11. An orange alert means very heavy rainfall of 11 cm to 20 cm. All three districts (Dakshina Kannada, Udupi and Uttara Kannada) declared a holiday for schools and PU colleges on Monday. A holiday has been declared by the authorities in Dakshina Kannada and Udupi for schools and PU colleges on Monday. Meanwhile, Uttara Kannada MP Vishweshwar Hegde Kageri on Monday visited affected areas in Shashihital and Gunda village and Baskeri of Kumta constituency as well as care centres in Honnavar taluk and met the affected people. Karwar MLA Satish Sail offered 'bagina' (an offering to rivers in spate, a tradition followed in Karnataka) to Kadra reservoir on Monday.

Assam flood situation improves marginally, 18.80 lakh still affected



PTI ■ GUWAHATI

The flood situation in Assam improved marginally as the number of people reeling under the deluge in 27 districts decreased to around 18.80 lakh, officials said on Tuesday. The toll in this year's flood, landslide and storm rose to 85 with six more deaths reported on Monday, they said. Several major rivers, including the Brahmaputra, continued to flow over the danger level at different places with a forecast of rain in isolated places. The affected population was 18,80,700 in 27 districts as compared to almost 22.75 lakh people suffering from the deluge on Sunday, the officials said. Dhubri with nearly 4.75 lakh

people reeling under water was the worst-hit district, followed by Cachar with over 2.01 lakh and Barpeta with nearly 1.36 lakh suffering from the flood. The administration has been operating 543 camps and relief distribution centres in 25 districts, taking care of 3,45,500 displaced people at present, the officials said. Rescue operations by multiple agencies, including National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) and SDRF are being carried out across the affected areas. The Regional Meteorological Centre in Guwahati said on Monday that a cyclonic circulation lies over Assam and neighbourhoods up to 1.5 km above the mean sea level. In the next 24 hours, thunderstorms and lightning

are very likely to occur at isolated places over Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya,

Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram and Tripura, it added. The Brahmaputra river is

flowing above the danger mark at Nimatighat, Tezpur, Guwahati, and Dhubri.

PUBLIC NOTICE
Flat Unit No.4051 Floor 5, Tower-4, Sector-150, Noida(West) was booked in the name of Late Mr. Sunil Mehra S/o Mr. R.N. Mehra expired on 17.04.2021. Regarding mentioned property, the name of Mrs Meenu Mehra who is also co-allottee of this property is being noted as Primary allottee in M/s Homekraft Infra Pvt.Ltd records in respect of captioned unit.
If anybody has any objection to this, he or she may approach M/s Homekraft Infra Pvt.Ltd. within 21 days of publication of this notice at address: ATS Tower, Plot No-16, 2nd Floor, Sector-135, Noida-201305. Mobile: 91-120-7111500

PUBLIC NOTICE
It is informed to all concern that Smt. Pushpa Kayat D/o Sh. Gopi Ram R/o H. No-7 Church Lane Jangpura Bhogal Delhi-110014 and Sh. Shivam Gaur S/o Sh. Ranvir Singh R/o B-166 Sector-14 Noida are the co-owner of Plot No. C-2/32 Sector-31 Noida. Smt. Pushpa Kayat has executed a Registered G.P.A. of her part in the said above plot in favour of her sister Smt. Sneha Gaur D/o Sh. Gopi Ram R/o B-166 Sector-14 Noida dated 03/11/2018 in Book No. IV volume No. 1635 on page No. 195 to 210. Document no.2224 Sub. Registrar (III), Noida. It is also to be informed that Smt. Pushpa Kayat applied in the Noida Authority to transfer her share in the plot in favour of her sister Smt. Sneha Gaur. Which is still pending. Now Smt. Sneha Gaur, instead of her name, want to transfer the share of said above plot through registered G.P.A in favour of Shivam Gaur S/o Sh. Ranvir Singh R/o B-166 Sector-14 Noida. If anyone has/have any objection, he/she may file his/her objection along with the sufficient proof in the Residential Plot Department of Noida Authority, Sector-6 Noida within the 30 days from the date of publication of this notice. Shivam Gaur

MANUFACTURING AND SUPPLYING WORKS IN ALIPURDUAR JUNCTION
E-Tender Notice No.: 71/W-2/APDJ, Dated: 06-07-2024. E-Tender are invited by the undersigned for the following works;
Tender No.: 21-AP-II-2024; Name of Work: Manufacturing and supplying of 50 mm size machine crushed Pakur variety ballast from quarry Pakur/Bakudhi/Taljhari/Raigram in Alipurduar Division. **Tender Value: ₹5,46,87,268.35; Earnest Money: ₹23,400/-; Date & time of closing of tender at 13:00 hrs. and opening at 15:00 hrs. on 29-07-2024.** For complete information about the tender document of above e-tender will be available in website <http://www.ireps.gov.in>.
DRM(W), Alipurduar Jn. NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY
Serving Customers With A Smile

PUBLIC NOTICE
Notice is hereby given that my client Raman Tomar is in process to avail the LAP against his property Bearing No. 33, Area Measuring 190 sq. Yds. Part of Khasra No. 450/434/11 situated in Village Babupur in the abadi of Babupur Main Road Illequa Shahdara Delhi-110032 (taking loan from Suryodaya Small Finance Bank), having acquired the same vide Relinquishment Deed dated 21.12.2021 executed by Satish Kumar Tomar, Om Prakash Tomar, Vinod Tomar, Sanjay Tomar, Ankit Tomar, Bharat Tomar, Rashmi Tomar and Minakshi Tomar in favour of Raman Tomar. (Doc. No. 8392) All persons having any claim against or in respect of the said Property, or any part thereof, by way of sale, exchange, mortgage (equitable) registered or otherwise), gift, trust, inheritance, family arrangement, maintenance, bequest, partnership, possession, lease, sublease, tenancy, license, lien, charge, pledge, easement or otherwise howsoever, are hereby requested to notify the same in writing to us with supporting documentary evidence at the address mentioned below within 7 days from the date hereof, failing which the claim or claims, if any, of such person or persons will be considered to have been waived and/or abandoned.
Kamal Kant Gupta (Advocate)
Unit No. FF-2, First Floor, Mahalaxmi Metro Tower Sec-4, Vasthali, Gb., U.P., Mob. 9810063351

Karnataka Bank Ltd.
Your Family Bank. Across India.
Plot No-6, HL Square, Sector 5, Dwarka, New Delhi-110077 Ph No- 011-41064861
NOTICE REGARDING LOCKER OPERATION
Notice is being published hereby for break open of lockers for which annual rent has not been paid by the lockers holders for three years or more in a row. Notice(s) sent to the respective locker hire(s) has/have been returned unserved. The locker hire(s) / other interested parties are hereby informed that in case they fail to regularize the locker arrangement by visiting the Branch, within 7 days from the date of this notice, Bank will be constrained to force open the locker(s) and take necessary further actions, as the bank may deem fit, at the cost and expenses of locker hire(s). List of such lockers are mentioned below:

Sl No.	Locker Holders	Locker No
1.	Keemli Lal Babbar	357
2.	Shounit Kapur	102
3.	Anish Kishore	273

Place : Dwarka, Delhi Date : 15-07-2024 Branch Head, Karnataka bank Ltd, Dwarka Branch Mobile Number- 8586924204, Email-551@ktkbank.com

SYMBOLIC POSSESSION NOTICE
ICICI Bank Branch Office: ICICI Bank Ltd., Plot No. 23, Shal Tower, 3rd Floor, New Rohtak Road, Karol Bagh, New Delhi- 110005
The Authorised ICICI Bank Officer under the Securitisation, Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of the powers conferred under section 13(12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002, issued Demand Notices to the borrower(s) mentioned below, to repay the amount mentioned in the Notice within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said Notice. Having failed to repay the amount, the Notice is issued to the borrower and the public in general that the undersigned has taken symbolic possession of the property described below, by exercising powers conferred on him/her under Section 13(4) of the said Act read with Rule 8 of the said rules on the below-mentioned dates. The below described immovable property mortgaged/ charged to the Secured creditor, the physical possession of which has been taken by the Authorised Officer of ICICI Bank Limited will be sold on 'As is where is', 'As is what is' and 'Whatever there is' as per the brief particulars given hereunder;

Sr. No.	Name of the Borrower(s)/ Loan Account Number	Description of Property/ Date of Symbolic Possession	Date of Demand Notice/ Amount in Demand (Rs)	Name of Branch
1.	Khyati Saini/ Manoj Kumar/ LBLUC00004321937	House No 3, Part of Kharsa No 455, Situated At Village Madyaywn Pragana Mahona, Tehsil Bakshi Ka Talab, Jankipuram Extension, District Lucknow, Uttara Pradesh- 226005/ July 06, 2024	December 29, 2023 Rs. 21,75,094/-	Lucknow/ Delhi/ Gurgaon

The above-mentioned borrower(s)/guarantor(s) is/are hereby issued a 30 day Notice to repay the amount, else the mortgaged properties will be sold after 30 days from the date of publishing this Notice, as per the provisions under Rules 8 and 9 of Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002.
Date: July 10, 2024 Place: Delhi & Gurgaon
Sincerely Authorised Signatory For ICICI Bank Ltd.

ICICI Bank Branch Office: ICICI Bank Limited, 3rd Floor Shal Tower, New Rohtak Road, Karol Bagh, Delhi- 110005
PUBLIC NOTICE-TENDER CUM E-AUCTION FOR SALE OF SECURED ASSET
(See proviso to Rule 8(a))
Notice for sale of immovable asset(s)
E-Auction Sale Notice for the sale of immovable asset(s) under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 8 (6) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002.
This notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower(s) and Guarantor(s) that the below described immovable property mortgaged/ charged to the Secured creditor, the physical possession of which has been taken by the Authorised Officer of ICICI Bank Limited will be sold on 'As is where is', 'As is what is' and 'Whatever there is' as per the brief particulars given hereunder;

Sr. No.	Name of Borrower(s)/ Co-Borrowers/ Guarantors/ Loan Account No.	Details of the Secured asset(s) with known encumbrances, if any	Amount Outstanding	Reserve Price/ Earnest Money Deposit	Date and Time of Property Inspection	Date & Time of E-Auction
(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)	(E)	(F)	(G)
1.	Vikram Paul (Borrower), Banita Paul (Co-Borrower) Lan No. LBNOD00002263659	Flat No. NGP-174 Along With Parking Space No. PP2104 and PP2105, 17th Floor, Tower-P, DLF New Town Heights, Sector-90, Gurgaon Area - 2727 Sq ft	Rs. 1,57,57,832/- as on July 03, 2024	Rs. 1.63, 25,000/- To 500/-	August 01, 2024, From 12:00 Noon To 02:00 Noon	August 21, 2024 From 11:00 AM

The online auction will be conducted on the website URL: <https://www.bankauctions.com> of our auction agency C1 india Pvt Ltd The Mortgage(s) Notices are given a last chance to pay the total dues with further interest by August 20, 2024 before 05:00 PM else the secured asset(s) will be sold as per schedule.
The prospective bidder(s) must submit the Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) Demand Draft (DD) (Refer Column 5) to the Authorised Officer of ICICI Bank Limited, 3rd Floor Shal Tower, New Rohtak Road, Karol Bagh, Delhi-110005 on or before August 20, 2024 before 05:00 PM. Thereafter, they have to submit their offer through the website mentioned above on or before August 20, 2024 before 05:00 PM along with the scanned image of the Bank acknowledged DD towards proof of payment of EMD. In case the prospective bidder(s) is/are unable to submit his/ her/ their offer through the website, then the signed copy of tender documents may be submitted at ICICI Bank Limited, 3rd Floor Shal Tower, New Rohtak Road, Karol Bagh, Delhi-110005 on or before August 20, 2024 before 05:00 PM. Earnest Money Deposit DD/PO should be from a Nationalised/ Scheduled Bank in favour of 'ICICI Bank Limited' payable at Delhi.
For any further clarifications in terms of inspection, Terms and Conditions of the E-Auction or submission of tenders, contact ICICI Bank Employee Phone No. 8928935040/8584874809
Please note that the Marketing agencies 1. M/s NexGen Solutions Private Limited, 2. Augoe Asset Management Pvt. Ltd., 3. Hecta Proptech Pvt. Ltd. have also been engaged for facilitating the sale of this property. The Authorised Officer reserves the right to reject any or all the bids without furnishing any further reasons. For detailed Terms and Conditions of the sale, please visit www.icicibank.com/m4p4s
Date : July 10, 2024 Place: Delhi/ NCR
Authorized Officer ICICI Bank Limited

Maha to bring new law to crack down on bogus pathology labs

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Maharashtra Minister Uday Samant on Tuesday said the state government has drafted a law to crack down on bogus pathology labs, which will provide punishment to violators. During the Question Hour in the state assembly, Samant, the higher and technical education minister, said the proposed law would entail proper rules and regulations, and flying squads would be formed to check violations. Unregistered pathology laboratories will not be allowed to operate, he said. The issue concerns the urban

development, public health and medical education departments, Samant said. BJP MLA Ashish Shelar said bogus pathology labs were looting money and playing with people's lives. Several collection centres that have come up over the years should be registered, he said, demanding criminal cases against violators. NCP (SP) legislator Rajesh Tope said the Nursing Home Act should be amended if the state government can't implement the new law soon. To this, the minister said the draft of the new law was ready, and if needed, the Nursing Home Act would also be amended.

Yogesh Sagar of the BJP said pathology forms a base for any surgery, and the poor end up going to bogus labs for testing. Shiv Sena (UBT) MLA Ajay Choudhary claimed that bogus pathology labs work in connivance with government hospitals. The discussion took place on a question by BJP legislator Sunil Rane, who sought data about the number of pathology labs in Mumbai. He expressed surprise at the government's reply that under existing rules of the Mumbai Municipal Corporation Act 1888, there was no provision for registration of pathology labs.

NORTHERN RAILWAY
OPEN-E-TENDER NOTICE
The Sr. Divisional Engineer-III, Northern Railway, Delhi Division invites E-Tender for the following work.

Name of work :	Structural condition of survey by underwater ROV inspection and videography of Bridge No.249 in the section of Sr.DEN-III/INDLS.
Approx Cost of Work	Rs. 2,05,524/- (Rupees Two Lakh Five Thousand Five Hundred Twenty Four Only)
Earnest Money to be deposited	Rs. 4,100/- (Rupees Four Thousand One Hundred Only)
Cost of Tender Document	Rs. 0.00/-
Date & Time of Submission of tender bid and opening of tender.	30.07.2024 at 15:00 Hrs.
Website particulars where complete details of tender documents can be seen.	www.ireps.gov.in
Allocation	04-300-32

• The tenderer/s must be registered on the Indian Railway E-Procurement system (IREPS) site i.e. www.ireps.gov.in for participating in the e-tender system. • For all terms and conditions please refer tender document. • No manual offers are acceptable. • Cost of tender document and Earnest money will be acceptable through net banking or payment gateway only. **No. 128-W/280/e Tender Notice/NIT/23/2024-25/W-3 Dated: 09.07.2024 2084/24**
SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

Strong message

PM Modi's Russia visit signals India's intent to preserve its strategic autonomy and pursue its national interest

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is in Moscow for a two-day state visit. The visit comes after a long gap as the last time PM Modi visited Russia was in 2019. Since then, a lot has happened in the international arena and India and Russia have emerged as reliable friends. This visit holds profound implications for India-Russia relations, and it sends nuanced messages to both China and the West. India and Russia share a long-standing relationship rooted in historical, strategic, and economic cooperation. This visit underscores India's commitment to maintaining and strengthening these traditional ties. The partnership between the two nations spans various sectors, including defence, energy, space, and nuclear technology. By reaffirming these bonds, PM Modi signals India's intent to preserve its strategic autonomy and resist external pressures to align exclusively with any single global power bloc. India's relationship with China has been marked by border tensions. PM Modi's visit to Russia is a strategic manoeuvre in this delicate



balance. Russia and China have their own close ties. However, India's engagement with Russia serves to remind China that India has strong partnerships beyond its immediate neighbourhood. PM Modi was welcomed at the airport by Russia's First Deputy Prime Minister, Denis Manturov, a higher-ranking official than the Deputy Prime Minister who greeted Chinese President Xi Jinping on his recent visit. This underscores the significant importance Russia places on its relationship with India and is in contrast with Xi Jinping's welcome, where the lower-ranking Deputy Prime Minister received him. On the other hand, India's relationship with Western powers, particularly the United States, has grown significantly in recent years. However, by visiting Russia, PM Modi communicates India's desire to maintain an independent foreign policy. This visit is a reminder that India will not be swayed into a singular alignment with Western interests. It underscores India's multipolar approach to international relations, where it seeks to engage with all major powers based on mutual interests and benefits. To put things in perspective Russia happens to be the major supplier of arms to India and India made no bones about buying Russian oil despite western sanctions. One of the critical aspects of PM Modi's visit is the focus on economic and energy cooperation. Russia is a significant supplier of energy resources, including oil and natural gas. Strengthening this energy partnership helps India secure its energy future while diversifying its sources. Defence cooperation has been a cornerstone of India-Russia relations. PM Modi's visit likely includes discussions on furthering defence ties and technology transfers. Furthermore, India has challenges in its neighbourhood and by leveraging its friendship with Russia, it can always have an edge. Besides, Russian support would come handy in India's bid for a permanent seat at the United Nations. India's engagement with Russia is vital for world peace and fostering a multipolar world which is the best guarantee for world peace.



NDRF personnel rescue trapped people from the flooded areas in Tanakpur PTI

The Imperative of upskilling strategies in modern business

By investing in learning and development initiatives, organisations not only equip their workforce with essential skills but also drive sustainable growth

In today's fast-evolving business environment, the ability to adapt and thrive through continuous learning has become indispensable for sustained success. To remain competitive amidst technological advancements, economic shifts, and geopolitical changes, businesses must adopt proactive upskilling strategies. These strategies empower organizations to innovate and stay resilient, ensuring readiness to tackle uncertainty and adapt to evolving market demands. A crucial aspect of fostering organizational success lies in developing a robust upskilling plan tailored to the needs of C-suite executives. This comprehensive approach focuses not only on enhancing technical competencies but also on cultivating strategic thinking and leadership abilities. CEOs play a pivotal role in this endeavor by investing in tailored Learning and Development (L&D) programs. These initiatives aim to refine communication skills, enhance adaptability, manage crises effectively, and unleash influential leadership potential. Strategic thinking involves



synthesising information from diverse sources and cultivating collaborative relationships with stakeholders. These competencies are pivotal for making informed decisions and driving organizational progress. Embracing technology-centric strategies that incorporate cutting-edge skills such as Generative AI, Machine Learning, Data Analytics, and Cybersecurity is essential for navigating complexities and maintaining market competitiveness. To effectively implement upskilling initiatives, organizations must first identify skill gaps within their workforce through regular assessments and performance reviews. Tailoring training programs to address these specific needs is key. Technology plays a crucial role in modern L&D, with e-learning platforms, virtual classrooms, and mobile appli-

cations offering flexible and accessible training options. Research underscores the importance of fostering a culture of continuous learning. Encouraging cross-functional experience is another pivotal element of a robust development plan. Leaders benefit from rotating through various roles and departments, gaining a comprehensive understanding of the organization and fostering better decision-making. Building strong internal and external relationships is crucial, enabling effective collaboration and leveraging partnerships for innovation and growth. The 2024 Business Outlook Report highlights that a significant majority of small and medium-sized enterprises have either implemented or plan to implement upskilling strategies. Failure to do so risks falling behind in a competitive landscape. McKinsey & Company supports this, citing that investment in employee development enhances engagement and retention. AI-powered Human Capital Management (HCM) systems are transforming how

organizations manage skills gaps. These systems analyze workforce data to identify current competencies and predict future skill requirements, recommending personalized development opportunities. Tracking metrics such as employee engagement, course completion rates, and skill acquisition is crucial for refining L&D strategies aligned with business objectives. Creating a culture that values learning is pivotal for upskilling success. Leaders must champion continuous development by setting an example, fostering an environment where learning is encouraged and rewarded. This involves integrating development goals into performance reviews, providing incentives for learning activities, and ensuring visible support from CEOs and senior leaders. Such a culture not only keeps businesses abreast of industry changes but also fosters sustainable growth and innovation, securing a competitive edge in the market. (The writer is CEO, TimesPro; views are personal)



ANISH SRIKRISHNA

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Babas thrive on social equality deficit

The Hathras incident points to a deeper societal neglect of marginalised communities, offering a fertile ground for dubious leaders to emerge as champions of social reform

The unfortunate incident in Hathras is finding a very despicable narrative in social media. Nobody seems to be mourning the death of 120-odd people belonging mostly to the Dalit community but contesting the fact that a godman had emerged from the Jatav community. We political analysts talk of undercurrents in polls and leave it unexplained. The emergence of a Baba like Surajpal Singh explains it. In times when the most powerful of the political leaders with the help of all the money and machinery at their disposal find it difficult to get 25000 people to attend a rally, there must be something in Surajpal Singh's modus operandi which saw a gathering of 250000 people. When the BJP blames the Hindu voters for deserting it, particularly in Uttar Pradesh during the last parliamentary elections, its answer lies in the Hathras incident. The opposition leaders led by Rahul Gandhi and Akhilesh Yadav have blamed the administration for the tragedy and in a way covertly if not overtly taken a stand in defence of the Baba. It's not only about a Surajpal from the Jatav community but several others like Rampal from the Jat community in Haryana, who have challenged the upper caste monopoly on Hindu spiritual discourse. They have their methods that challenge the Puritan practices but they are applauded by their followers for it. The police report filed in the matter states that organisers "underreported the number of expected attendees, did not cooperate in managing traffic, and concealed evidence after the stampede, which occurred when people stopped to collect soil from the path of the baba's vehicle." The FIR indicated that the police and administration did everything possible with available resources. The FIR ironically also shows that how the administration, not just district but pan-India, has been completely unaware of the swelling undercurrent. When such a large gathering of people clamber to clutch dust particles



kicked up by a departing godman's car, it reflects that the government and society have failed to engage with the poor and the deprived. Poverty is not as an economist would define it but that of ignorance and inequality. This provides just the fertile ground for a Baba from the community to emerge as a 'social reformer'. The social reform programmes of the government, be it the 'sarvodaya' of the yore or the 'antodaya' of the current times, have focussed on cash transfer and not social equity transfer. This explains the financial sinews of Surajpal and others like him. The financially prosperous in the community donate liberally as he talks of ending social discrimination. In his discourses Surajpal talks of equality and empowerment. He advocates education and even facilitates the admission of children from his community into upmarket schools. He routinely condemns caste-based discrimination and preaches universal brotherhood. What got his following soar was that during the Covid-19 pandemic, he is reported to have facilitated food and medicine distribution and other such succour to the poor from the community. During the second wave of the pandemic, in

THE SOCIAL REFORM PROGRAMMES OF THE GOVERNMENT, BE IT THE 'SARVODAY' OF THE YORE OR THE 'ANTODAY' OF THE CURRENT TIMES, HAVE FOCUSED ON CASH TRANSFER AND NOT SOCIAL EQUITY TRANSFER. THIS EXPLAINS THE FINANCIAL SINEWS OF SURAJPAL AND OTHERS LIKE HIM

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

REEVALUATE CANDIDACY CRITERIA

Madam — The radical Sikh preacher and chief of 'Waris Punjab De', Amritpal Singh, who is imprisoned in Assam's Dibrugarh district under the National Security Act, and Kashmiri leader Sheikh Abdul Rashid, popularly known as Engineer Rashid, who is in Delhi's Tihar jail for a terror funding case under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, were granted parole to take their oaths as members of the Lok Sabha on July 5. This event took place amid heavy security in and around the Parliament complex. People are wondering how, under our constitution, both individuals were allowed to run for MP and won convincingly as independents. This reflects on the electorate's choices, not the country's policies. Moreover, while both Amritpal (31) and Rashid (56) took their oaths to uphold the Constitution, they have no faith in it. I believe it is high time our Parliament revisited the criteria for election candidates. Anyone facing charges of terrorism or anti-national activities should not be allowed to contest elections, regardless of their popularity. Any individual who does not respect India's integrity and sovereignty should be ineligible to file a nomination. Instead, an affidavit affirming faith in the Constitution and National Integrity should be a prerequisite for candidates. Bidyut Kumar Chatterjee Faridabad

CELEBRATING TRUE HEROES

Madam — At a recent event in Kozhikode, Kerala, Union Minister Suresh Gopi referred to the cleaning staff as "superheroes" for their efforts in maintaining the cleanliness of the venue. He also invited them to sit in seats reserved for special guests, which they did hesitantly. Kudos to the minister for recognizing and honoring the work of a group of workers who are often overlooked. We hope this generous gesture will inspire more such acts of appreciation for those who typically remain on

Mumbai battles monsoon rains



Mumbai, India's financial capital, has come to a standstill as heavy rain lashes the city, causing widespread flooding and disruption. The city's residents are struggling to cope with the torrential downpour, which has led to waterlogging in many areas, particularly low-lying regions like Sion,

Andheri, and Kurla. The rain has also caused significant damage to property and infrastructure, with reports of wall collapses and tree falls disrupting daily life. The city's drainage system has been overwhelmed, leaving many areas submerged in water and hindering emergency services. The heavy rain has also affected the city's transportation systems, with flights and trains delayed or cancelled, and major roads clogged with traffic. Schools and offices have been forced to shut down, and the authorities are working hard to mitigate the situation. However, the city's residents are bracing themselves for another day of heavy rain and flooding, as the weather forecast predicts more rainfall in the coming days. The situation has sparked discussions on the need for improved urban planning and infrastructure to handle such extreme weather events. Purva Pandya Ujjain

the margins of social functions. Even Gandhiji once said, "Sanitation is more important than Independence." Avinash Godbole Dewas

AGENDA OF PM'S RUSSIA VISIT

Madam — As Prime Minister Narendra Modi traveled to Russia on Monday, July 8, there was anticipation about whether he would address the issue of Indian nationals fighting for the Russian army in the conflict zone and ensure their safe return to India as soon as possible. The prime minister will hold summit talks with President Vladimir Putin amid the ongoing conflict in Ukraine during this visit, which is his first trip to Russia since 2019 and the first since the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. India has a longstanding relationship with Russia, initially with the USSR, thanks to the diplomatic and strategic initiatives of various Congress governments over the decades. More recently, during his ten years as Prime Minister, Dr. Manmohan Singh met with Russian Presidents Vladimir Putin and Dmitry

Medvedev 16 times, either in India or Russia. In comparison, this is only Mr. Modi's 11th meeting with President Putin after a decade in office. Between FY14 and FY23, India's exports to Russia stagnated, dropping from USD 3.17 billion to USD 3.14 billion, while imports surged dramatically from USD 6.34 billion to USD 46.21 billion. Such an imbalanced trade relationship is unsustainable in the long term and has harmful effects on our domestic industry. According to the Indian Embassy in Moscow, at least 50 Indian nationals have joined the Russian army. Many others have been "duped" into fighting in a war where they have no stake, aside from a chance to escape the poverty and unemployment crisis perpetuated by the current administration. Will the prime minister address the plight of these youth and ensure their safe return to India as soon as possible? Bhagwan Thadani Mumbai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

DISCOVERING TRUE STRENGTH

The soul's intrinsic qualities of peace, love, and wisdom give us true strength and power

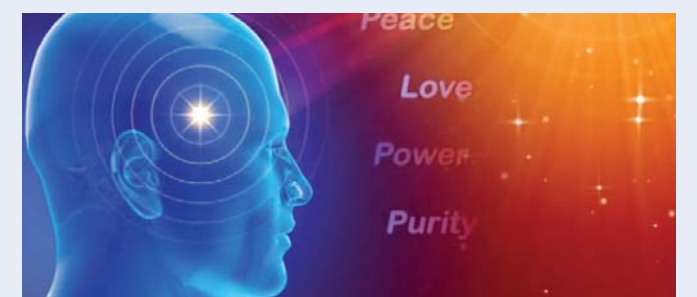


RAJYOGI BRAHMAKUMAR NIKUNJ JI

Mahatma Gandhi has defined power in 2 forms, one is obtained by the fear of punishment and the other by acts of love. According to him power based on love is a thousand times more effective and permanent than the one derived from fear of punishment. However, the world that we live in today has a different scenario wherein power spells authority, strength, capability and superiority. If we walk down history lane, we can see that all good and bad endeavours by individuals or groups in the past were directed at garnering power.

Be it world wars, political uprisings, revolutions, religious propaganda, scientific research, technological innovations, economic strategies, or ethnic-cultural dominance, almost everything was aimed at being powerful or being in the seat of power. So what is it about power that makes most of us go crazy after it? Well!! The simple reply to this would be .. Who doesn't want to be powerful & experience the adrenaline rush? Of course, all of us just love that moment of power that allows us to do what we want to do on our terms.

Power has different meanings for different people, but the most common association of power is with money and that is why the rich and the powerful people in society always make headlines due to their high net worth. Another common imagery of power goes with political leaders who are seen as synonymous with power. In the 21st century, science and technology combined with marketing has also become another means of power along with media which has also emerged as a highly influential medium of power. It won't be exaggerating to say that media is one such source that affects all other powers as it can help to highlight downplay or even destroy the power value of all the above-mentioned powers. However in reality these are all outer forms or sources of power and since they are based on outer reality they tend to deplete or change and perish with time also they are unstable, unreliable and often disempowering. If that is so then what is the True source of power? The majority of us are unaware of the reality that True power is rooted in human consciousness i.e. in the soul. Yes!! But it's unfortunate that most of us, in our quest for power, totally forget that money or status



is the only means from which temporary power can be derived. Such power is also limited in its outreach, value or benefit.

The sense of 'I' and 'mine' turns such power into a limitation and it has its influence for a limited period on a limited area of life to a limited degree. On the other hand, true power will be unlimited, benevolent and universal in its impact & hence it will automatically empower others. Therefore to reclaim our real power we need to first understand who we are and live life from a spiritual perspective because when the spirit is awake and aware it is indomitable. When we become aware of how powerful we are from within, we become free from all kinds of desires.

Remember! A person who can control his thoughts and emotions and live by the highest values of peace, love, truth and joy under all circumstances is truly powerful. Such a person can influence and bring about change not only in his life but also in others' lives and the world around him. As children of the Supreme, every human being is a soul inherent with core values like peace, joy, love, purity, wisdom, power and bliss. Due to gross ignorance about these very values, we lose our true power and start searching for it in the wrong sources. That is why today the whole human race has become weak and impure. But! Now the Supreme Source of Power himself is guiding us all to regain our lost power and sovereignty by imparting knowledge of spirit (soul) through which we would become the rulers of our inner kingdom. So what are we waiting for? Let's just begin the journey to experience real power by connecting to our true selves and the Supreme Source.

(The writer is a spiritual educator and a popular columnist; views are personal)

Airfares to surge amidst aircraft shortage

Indian air travelers are bracing for a steep hike in ticket prices as India is feeling the repercussions of a significant disruption in Boeing's production schedule



Airfares to shoot up sharply as airlines in India, the third largest in the world, face a shortage of aircraft. The airlines are to suffer as the US Boeing is in crisis for its Starliner space vehicle leakage and two fatal crashes defrauding the US government. Boeing has lost more than \$32 billion since 2019. Fewer companies could lose that kind of money and not be facing bankruptcy. Boeing may face three years of probation, independent safety audits and a penalty of \$ 487.3 million in penalty. It has put its new aircraft manufacturing off schedule causing delivery of far fewer planes to airlines in India. It would hamper the growth of the industry here and limit the capability to offer seats to fliers. It would result in severe seat shortages and spiralling fares.

The US Justice Department might charge Boeing with fraud if it does not plead guilty to two deadly Max crashes in 2018 and 2019 killing 346 people. The case stems from the department's determination that Boeing violated an agreement that was intended to resolve a 2021 charge of conspiracy to defraud the US government. Boeing is charged with misleading regulators who approved the 737 Max and set pilot-training requirements to fly the plane. The company blamed two relatively low-level employees for the fraud. Boeing reached a \$2.5 billion settlement for the 2018 and 2019 Ethiopian crashes with the Justice Department in January 2021 to avoid prosecution on a single charge of fraud — misleading federal regulators who approved the plane.

Boeing blamed the deception on two relatively low-level employees. In March 2019, an Ethiopian Airlines 737 MAX crashed, killing all 157 on board, after which regulators around the world grounded MAX aircraft. The crashes were blamed on a flaw with a newly-

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BOEING REACHED A \$2.5 BILLION SETTLEMENT FOR THE 2018 AND 2019 ETHIOPIAN CRASHES WITH THE JUSTICE DEPARTMENT IN JANUARY 2021 TO AVOID PROSECUTION ON A SINGLE CHARGE OF FRAUD — MISLEADING FEDERAL REGULATORS WHO APPROVED THE PLANE

inducted system for pushing the aircraft nose down to prevent the plane from stalling.

This week the justice department's criminal fraud section told a federal court Boeing violated terms of the settlement by failing to make promised changes to detect and prevent violations of federal anti-fraud laws. The determination means that Boeing could be prosecuted "for any federal criminal violation," including the charge of fraud that the company hoped to avoid with the settlement, the Justice Department said.

The company handed over 27 planes in January, its lowest tally since September, compared with 67 deliveries in December. It sold three Boeing 737 Max planes but also logged three cancellations. As it was grappling with the situation on January 5, 2024, a door plug blew out on an Alaska Airlines flight at 16,000 feet shortly after take-off from Portland, Oregon. None was injured but it ripped off headrests and exposed passengers to a gaping hole in the 26th row. Bolts holding a door panel were also found missing, the US National Transportation Safety Board reported.

This led the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to halt Boeing's planned production increases till it was satisfied with the quality control issues.

The Max planes that Air India wants to buy, Boeing says, would have to rework about 50 of the undelivered planes because of incorrectly drilled holes in 22 fuselages or the larger outer shell that encompasses the main aircraft body.

It is a new production glitch that could slow deliveries further. Various FAA safety inspections would periodically stop the production line. The FAA says that it would allow the variant of the 737 Max 9 with the door plug to fly again — after demanding checks to the bolts on every plane. The family of two MAX victims want Boeing to face a criminal trial and pay a fine of \$ 24.8 billion. They are against plea bargaining saying this was just a reworking of "letting Boeing off the hook". In such a situation, the hope of Air India Express and Akasa getting their deliveries does not look bright.

Questions arise about how the two airlines agreed to the deal of MAX, which still has not cleared safety issues. China has reportedly cancelled some of its bookings. Amid such situations in June 2022, Tata Sons signed the agreement during the Paris Air Show for 20 Boeing Dreamliners, 10 Boeing 777X widebody aircraft, and 190 Boeing 737 MAX narrow-body aircraft along with 250 Euro Airbus for \$ 70 billion, according to Tata Sons and Air India chairman N Chandrababhan.

In June 2023, IndiGo made the world's largest aircraft order by signing a deal for 500 A320 neo family planes from Airbus. IndiGo is expecting some Airbus 320 deliveries.

But that would not suffice the needs of the growing number of passengers. IndiGo is set to ground many aircraft. So would Spicejet, which met with several security issues. The delays, which are said to be unavoidable, would create a

shortage of aircraft almost with all major airlines, IndiGo, Spicejet, Akasa and Air India.

Jet Airways and Go First have gone bankrupt adding to the shortage. The Boeing crisis could hit India hard with Air India and Akasa having fewer aircraft and an overall shortage of seats for domestic and international routes spiralling fares. Airlines in India carried a record 152 million passengers in 2023, a 30 per cent increase from 2022 and a 5 per cent rise over 2019. According to the Director General of Civil Aviation, the domestic air traffic from January to May rose 4 per cent during the period to 13.8 million.

The aviation industry fears that the reduced aircraft delivery is set to impact the aviation market severely more so as several passengers rise more owing to a fallacious dynamic Indian Railways fare structure. It hikes train fares to the level of air fares making people prefer to travel by air. This is impacting the railways and the airlines alike.

Fares in certain destinations like Kochi-Delhi Kolkata-Delhi Mumbai-Delhi or Guwahati-Delhi could skyrocket and match some of the international routes as the country does not have an integrated transportation approach.

If the rail fares are cut and the reservation system rationalised, it could take off a significant load from the airlines. The unimaginative system predicts a scramble for airline tickets by the end of December winter vacation.

(The writer is a policy analyst; views expressed are personal)

Leadership shifts in the UK and Iran signal a new era of moderate politics

The recent election results in the UK and Iran reflect a broader global trend of voters favouring leaders who advocate for inclusivity and moderation

There has been a change of leadership in both the United Kingdom and Iran. In the UK, Rishi Sunak of the Conservative Party has been succeeded by Keir Starmer of the Labour Party. In Iran, the people have elected Masoud Pezeshkian, a reformist and relatively liberal candidate, as their new President.

The Iranian presidential election was necessitated by the death of the former President, Ebrahim Raisi, in a helicopter crash in May. These shifts, one in Europe and the other in Asia, represent a change in the mindset of people across continents. Both countries, with their rich traditions and civilizations, have seen their electorates reject hardliners in



AKHILESH SUMAN

favor of moderate leaders and parties.

This highlights how, when given the choice, people make thoughtful decisions on a large scale, guided by the current needs rather than the incessant rhetoric of hardliners invoking civilization and nationalism.

The Labour Party in Britain had been out of power for the last 14 years. Many predicted the party's demise and

believed the country would remain under Conservative rule indefinitely. The Conservatives, driven by their nationalistic desires, even led the UK out of the European Union, isolating the nation from its neighboring democracies. It is noteworthy that while the Conservatives' loss marks a historic low in the context of British democracy, the significant increase in seats for the Liberal Democrats, from 11 in 2019 to 72 now, represents a historic high.

As the Liberal Democrats are considered somewhat more left-leaning than even the Labour Party, there is a renewed emphasis on improving the quality of life for the common man, more so than at any other time in

the country's political landscape. Conversely, since the Islamic Revolution in 1979, Iran has consistently positioned itself against the West to assert its sovereignty. This stance has not only led to cultural conflicts with the West but also created significant challenges for Iran's economy. Its isolation and confrontations with G7 nations have weakened its oil-based economy.

Additionally, the Iranian people have periodically expressed their dissatisfaction with the country's social laws. With the recent changes in leadership in Britain and Iran, both new leaders have pledged to end their countries' isolation and foster global friendships. This suggests that the UK may seek to



renew ties with the European Union, and Iran may aim to improve relations with the West.

It will be interesting to see if Keir Starmer will reconsider Brexit and move the UK closer to the EU. Similarly, as the new Iranian President promises to "extend a hand of friendship to everyone," it

remains to be seen whether this will lead to peace with the USA and, eventually, with tech-rich Israel.

It will also be intriguing to observe if the Iranian leader can persuade the Supreme Leader to return to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) framework, which is the main reason for

Iran's isolation in the West. These election results suggest a potential leftward shift in global politics, with significant changes occurring in both major European and Asian countries.

This could mean that governments will need to focus more on job creation and improving the quality of life for their citizens. Britain is currently facing financial difficulties and high inflation, despite soaring property prices.

Similarly, the Iranian people are feeling the weight of ever-increasing sanctions imposed by the US and its allies. Iranians need a new economy and a new approach to their relations with the West. While Western nations are cautiously optimistic

about the change in Iran, they are confident that the new Labour leadership in the UK will adopt a pragmatic approach. Moving away from the Conservative tactics of unnecessary assertiveness driven by nostalgic colonial attitudes, the UK will need to redefine its strategy and engage more openly with the public.

Finally, there is a message for political parties worldwide: if you stay connected with the grassroots and continue to address the issues of the common people in pragmatic ways, you will remain relevant and potentially revive.

(The writer is a senior journalist and has been covering foreign affairs and international politics; views are personal)

New UK lawmakers gather to be sworn in

AP ■ LONDON

Hundreds of newly elected lawmakers trooped excitedly into Parliament on Tuesday after the UK's transformative election brought a Labour government to power. The halls of the labyrinthine building echoed with excited chatter as the 650 members of the House of Commons gathered — 335 of them arriving for the first time. That compares to 140 new lawmakers after the last election in 2019. The seat of British democracy took on a back-to-school feel, from the rows of lockers temporarily installed in wood-paneled corridors to the staff holding “Ask Me” signs ready to help bewildered newcomers. The new House of Commons includes the largest number of women ever elected — 263, some 40 per cent of the total —



Britain's Prime Minister Keir Starmer, background center, poses for a photograph with the new intake of Scottish Labour Members of Parliament, outside no 10 Downing Street, in London on Tuesday. AP

and the most lawmakers of colour, at 90. The youngest new lawmaker is Labour's Sam Carling, 22. He is one of 412 Labour legislators elected last week who will cram onto green benches on the government side of the House of Commons. Opposite them will be a

shrunken contingent of 121 Conservatives, a vastly increased number of Liberal Democrats, 72 strong, and a smattering of representatives from other parties including the environmentalist Green Party and the anti-immigration Reform UK.

Rishi Sunak names shadow Cabinet

PTI ■ LONDON

Rishi Sunak, the interim UK Opposition Leader until his Conservative Party finalises the process to choose his successor, has named a shadow Cabinet who will take their place in the House of Commons as the new members of Parliament begin being sworn in on Tuesday. The 44-year-old British Indian leader had to contend with some high-profile resignations and missing Tory MPs who lost their seats in the party's worst electoral defeat in last week's general election, which the Labour Party won with a landslide.

David Cameron, a former prime minister who was parachuted into the House of Lords by Sunak to become his foreign secretary last year, has resigned and the portfolio will now be shadowed by his former deputy Andrew Mitchell.

“It's been a huge honour to serve as foreign secretary, but clearly the Conservative Party



in Opposition will need to shadow the new foreign secretary from the Commons,” said Cameron in a social media post.

“As a committed Conservative I will continue to support the party and help where I can as we rebuild from the very disappointing election result,” he said.

Richard Holden resigned as party chairman after what he said was a “very tough set of results” and has been replaced by former economic secretary

to the UK Treasury Richard Fuller as interim chairman. James Cartlidge has been appointed shadow defence secretary and Ed Argar shadow justice secretary, after the former ministers in those briefs – Grant Shapps and Alex Chalk – lost their seats.

Kemi Badenoch, former business secretary, has been named shadow levelling up secretary after Michael Gove had stepped down as an MP, and Kevin Hollinrake will shadow Badenoch's former ministerial role in the Opposition.

Former Home Office minister Chris Philp will be the new shadow Leader of the House of Commons for the Tories after Penny Mordaunt suffered a defeat in the polls.

Many of the other portfolios will mirror their former ministerial posts from the Opposition benches, with Jeremy Hunt named as shadow chancellor, James Cleverly as shadow home secretary and Indian-origin Claire Coutinho as shadow energy security and

net zero secretary. Sunak and his shadow Cabinet will be in place for the early business in the Commons, with the State Opening of Parliament scheduled for July 17 when the King's Speech will lay out the Keir Starmer-led government's plans for the parliamentary calendar ahead. Starmer, meanwhile, has been whizzing around different parts of the United Kingdom before setting off on his first overseas tour as British Prime Minister to Washington for the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) summit.

His Cabinet, with a record number of women ministers including British Indian Culture Secretary Lisa Nandy, had their second meeting with him at 10 Downing Street on Tuesday.

Foreign Secretary David Lammy has been on a hurriedly organised European visit to Germany, Poland and Sweden. Chancellor Rachel Reeves made her maiden policy speech on Monday, promising mea-

sures such as planning reforms to get the economy growing again.

While Deputy Prime Minister Angela Rayner has the additional brief of Levelling Up Secretary, Home Secretary Yvette Cooper has a big challenge of illegal migration to tackle as Labour ditches the Tory plan to deport them to Rwanda.

Pakistani-origin Shabana Mahmood as Justice Secretary has to get to grips with an overflowing prison population and John Healey as the Defence Secretary has to set the UK's strategy amid ongoing global conflicts.

Wes Streeting as the new Health Secretary has set up meetings with striking National Health Service (NHS) junior doctors to find a resolution to the long-drawn crisis and Jonathan Reynolds will be preparing for his Department for Business and Trade to pick up on key issues, including the India-UK free trade agreement (FTA) negotiations.

To counter China, NATO moving closer under US leadership

AP ■ WASHINGTON

In the third year of the war in Ukraine, NATO is set to deepen relations with its four Indo-Pacific partners, which, although not part of the military alliance, are gaining prominence as Russia and China forge closer ties to counter the United States and the two Koreas support opposing sides of the conflict in Europe.

The leaders of New Zealand, Japan and South Korea for the third year in a row will attend the NATO summit, which starts Tuesday in Washington, DC, while Australia will send its deputy prime minister. China will be following the summit closely, worried by the alliance's growing interest beyond Europe and the Western Hemisphere.

“Increasingly, partners in Europe see challenges halfway around the world in Asia as

being relevant to them, just as partners in Asia see challenges halfway around the world in Europe as being relevant to them,” Secretary of State Antony Blinken said last week at the Brookings Institution.

America's top diplomat said the US has been working to break down barriers between European alliances, Asian coalitions and other partners worldwide. “That's part of the new landscape, the new geometry that we've put in place.” Countries with shared security concerns are strengthening ties as competition escalates between the United States and China. Washington is trying to curb Beijing's ambition to challenge the US-led world order, which the Chinese government dismisses as a Cold War mentality aimed at containing China's inevitable rise. On Monday, Beijing responded angrily to unconfirmed

reports that NATO and its four Indo-Pacific partners are expected to release a document laying out their relationship and ability to respond jointly to threats from cyberattacks and disinformation. Lin Jian, a spokesman for the Chinese foreign ministry, accused NATO of “breaching its boundary, expanding its mandate, reaching beyond its defence zone and stoking confrontation”. The war in Ukraine, which has pitted the West against Russia and its friends, has bolstered the argument for closer cooperation between the US, Europe and their Asian allies. “Ukraine of today may be East Asia of tomorrow,” Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida told the US Congress in April. The US and South Korea accused Pyongyang of supplying Russia with ammunition, while Russian President Vladimir Putin visited North

Korea last month and signed a pact with leader Kim Jong Un that envisions mutual military assistance.

South Korea and Japan, meanwhile, are sending military supplies and aid to Ukraine. The US also says China is providing Russia with machine tools, microelectronics and other technology that allow it to make weapons to use against Ukraine. South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol will bring to Washington “a strong message regarding the military cooperation between Russia and North Korea and discuss ways to enhance cooperation among NATO allies and Indo-Pacific partners,” his principal deputy national security adviser, Kim Tae-hyo, told reporters on Friday. New Zealand Prime Minister Christopher Luxon said discussions would “focus on our collective efforts to support the rules-based system”.

EU halts Georgia's accession to bloc, freezes financial aid over much-criticised law

AP ■ TBILISI

Georgia's accession to the European Union has been halted, and some of the bloc's financial support to the South Caucasus country has been frozen after the Georgian authorities adopted a new law that critics feared would curb democratic freedoms, the EU Ambassador in Georgia said Tuesday. According to Pawel Herczynski, EU leaders made the decision to halt the process during the last summit of the European Council, and it came in the wake of the Georgian authorities adopting the law on “foreign influence” despite weeks of protests. In addition, a total of 30 million euros (USD 32.5 million) in financial support, earmarked for Georgia's Defence Ministry in 2024, has been frozen, Herczynski said at a news conference. “This is only the first step, there will be other steps. Our

direct support to the government of Georgia will be limited, and we will seek to redirect support from the government of Georgia to civil society and the media,” he said. “It is sad to see EU-Georgia relations at such a low point, when they could have been at an all-time high.”

The law, which came into effect last month despite mass protests and a veto from the country's president, requires media, nongovernmental organisations and other non-profit groups to register as “pursuing the interests of a foreign power” if they receive more than 20 per cent of their funding from abroad. The opposition has denounced the bill as “the Russian law” because Moscow uses similar legislation to stigmatize independent news media, organisations and individuals critical of the Kremlin, and called its passage a sign of neighbouring Russia's hold

over Georgia. EU officials have repeatedly denounced the law as undemocratic and said it would hinder Georgia's path to EU membership.

The bloc agreed to grant membership candidate status to Georgia in December on condition that it fight disinformation, including against the EU, bring its foreign and security policies into line with the bloc's, and introduce new justice reforms, among other measures.

Membership talks did not get underway. To start talks with a candidate, the 27 EU nations and that country must agree on a negotiating mandate. EU experts must also conduct a screening procedure, to analyze how much work needs to be done to bring Georgia's laws and standards into line with those of the bloc.

Once those preconditions have been met, an intergovernmental conference would

be called with Georgia to officially launch the start of talks. Each step requires unanimous agreement from the EU member nations and can be blocked at any point.

At a summit on June 27, EU leaders warned Georgia that its path toward membership would be blocked unless the “foreign influence” law was repealed.

They called “on Georgia's authorities to clarify their intentions by reversing the current course of action which jeopardizes Georgia's EU path, de facto leading to a halt of the accession process.”

In the days before the summit, EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell said the bloc was considering “putting a hold to our financial assistance to the government” in Tbilisi and downgrading political contacts.

It was not clear how much money overall would be affected.

Israeli forces push deeper into Gaza

AP ■ DEIR-AL-BALAH

Israeli forces advanced deeper into the Gaza Strip's largest city in pursuit of militants who had regrouped there, sending thousands of Palestinians fleeing on Monday from an area ravaged in the early weeks of the nine-month-long war.

Hamas warned that the latest raids and displacement in Gaza City could lead to the collapse of long-running negotiations over a cease-fire and hostage release, after the two sides had appeared to have narrowed the gaps in recent days.

Israeli troops were again battling militants in areas that the army said had been largely cleared months ago in northern Gaza.

The military ordered evacuations ahead of the raids, but Palestinians said nowhere feels safe. Most of the population of 2.3 million has been displaced, often multiple times. Hundreds of thousands are packed into sweltering tent camps. Israel ordered the evacuation of northern Gaza in the first weeks of the war and has prevented most people from returning. But hundreds of thousands of Palestinians remain, living in shelters or the shells of homes. “We fled in the darkness amid heavy strikes,” said Sayeda Abdel-Baki, a mother of three who had sheltered with relatives in the Daraj neighbourhood. “This is my fifth displacement.” Residents reported artillery and tank fire, as well as airstrikes. Gaza's Health Ministry, with limited access to the north, did not immediately report casualties.

Israel issued additional evacuation orders for areas in other neighbourhoods of central Gaza City. The military said it had intelligence showing that militants from Hamas and the smaller Islamic Jihad group were in the area, and called on residents to head south to the city of Deir al-Balah.

Israel accuses Hamas and other militants of hiding among civilians. In Shijaiyah, a Gaza City neighbourhood that has seen weeks of fighting, the military said troops raided and destroyed schools and a clinic that had been converted into militant compounds.

The war has decimated large swaths of urban landscape and sparked a humanitarian catastrophe.

Israel and Hamas seem to be the closest they have been in months to agreeing to a cease-fire deal that would pause the fighting in exchange for the release of dozens of hostages captured by Hamas in the October 7 attack that triggered the war. CIA Director William Burns returned to the region Monday for talks in Cairo, according to Egypt's state-run Qahera TV, which is close to the security services. An Israeli delegation was also heading to the Egyptian capital, Israeli media reported.

But obstacles remain, even after Hamas agreed to relent on its key demand that Israel commit to ending the war as part of any agreement. A key part of that shift, officials told The Associated Press, is the level of destruction caused by Israel's rolling offensive. Hamas still wants mediators to guarantee that negotiations conclude with a permanent cease-fire, according to two officials with knowledge of the talks. The current draft says the mediators — the United States, Qatar and Egypt — “will do their best” to ensure that negotiations lead to an agreement to wind down the war.

Israel has rejected any deal that would force it to end the war with Hamas intact — a condition Netanyahu reiterated on Sunday. Hamas on Monday said it is “offering flexibility and positivity” to facilitate a deal, while accusing Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of “putting more obstacles in the way of negotiations”.

Meanwhile, Hamas' top political leader, Ismail Haniyeh, warned mediators of “catastrophic consequences” if Israel continued its operations in Gaza City, saying Netanyahu and the army would bear “full responsibility” for the collapse of the talks, the group said in a subsequent statement. The two officials said there's also an impasse around whether Hamas can choose the high-profile prisoners held by Israel that it wants released in exchange for hostages.

Newly elected French lawmakers negotiate to form next government

AP ■ PARIS

Newly elected lawmakers arrived Tuesday at the National Assembly, France's lower house of parliament, for talks seeking to cobble together a government majority after a chaotic election result left the legislature split among left, centre and far-right parties. President Emmanuel Macron on Monday asked his prime minister, Gabriel Attal, to continue handling day-to-day affairs, less than three weeks before the start of the Paris Olympics. Macron leaves Wednesday for a NATO summit in Washington.

Sunday's election left no faction even close to the majority needed to form a government, raising the risk of paralysis for the European Union's second-largest economy. While a fractured parliament is not uncommon in Europe, the situation is unprecedented in France's modern history.

Leaders of the leftist coalition, the New Popular Front, which won the most seats, say they should form a new government. The three main parties in the coalition — the hard-left France Unbowed, the Socialists and the Greens — began negotiations to find a candidate for prime minister.

The New Popular Front “is the leading Republican force in this country and it is therefore its responsibility to form a government ... to implement the public policies expected by the French people,” Green lawmaker Cyrielle Chatelain said. Hard-left lawmaker Mathilde Panot said, “France Unbowed lawmakers are going into the National Assembly not as an opposition force... but as a force that intends to govern the country.”

Their talks are complicated by internal divisions. Some are pushing for a hard-left figure while others, closer to the centre-left, prefer a more consen-

sual personality. France's prime minister is accountable to parliament and can be ousted through a no-confidence vote. Members of France Unbowed and the Greens arrived Tuesday morning at the National Assembly. The Socialist lawmakers, who include former President Francois Hollande, were to gather in the afternoon. The top negotiator for the Socialist party, Johanna Rolland, said the future prime minister won't be Jean-Luc Mélenchon, the divisive hard-left founder of France Unbowed who has angered many moderates. Speaking on France 2 television Tuesday, she suggested the leftist coalition could possibly work with centre-left members of Macron's alliance. “We will be open,” she said. Mélenchon, who did not run in the legislative elections, also joined the talks at the National Assembly on Tuesday afternoon. Yael Braun-Pivet, a member of Macron's centrist alliance

and former president of the National Assembly, said “in my view, the French people sent us a clear message. They did not want to give an absolute majority to any specific political bloc so they're ordering us to listen to one another, work together and that's what we need to do.” According to official results, all three main blocs fell far short of the 289 seats needed to control the 577-seat National Assembly, the most powerful of France's two legislative chambers.

The results showed just over 180 seats for the New Popular Front leftist coalition, which placed first to beat Macron's centrist alliance, with more than 160 seats. The far-right National Rally party of Marine Le Pen and its allies were restricted to third place, although their more than 140 seats were still way ahead of the party's previous best showing of 89 seats in 2022. Macron has three years remaining in his presidential term.

Indian-origin jailed for rape in Singapore

Singapore (PTI): An Indian-origin Singaporean bar owner was sentenced to jail for 13 years and four weeks on Monday and will receive nine strokes of the cane for raping a runaway 17-year-old girl after allowing her to work for him.

Raj Kumar Bala, 42, was convicted of a charge each of raping and molesting the victim and pleaded guilty to a third charge of harbouring a runaway under the Children and Young Persons Act, Channel News Asia reported.

Defence lawyer Ramesh Tiwary said his client has asked to be released on bail pending appeal, according to the channel's report. The court heard that the victim was 17 in February 2020 when she ran away from the Singapore Girls' Home. She found out about a job opportunity at Bala's Don Bar and Bistro in Dunlop Street in the Little India precinct of hotels, motels and eateries through another runaway who

was working there.

The other runaway was also sexually assaulted by Bala in a charge that stood down for the time being.

The victim went down to the bar to interview for the job and met Bala, who described the job duties to her, including serving customers and making drinks.

He offered her the role, saying she could stay at the bar with other runaways.

The victim worked at the bar for a few days, but police received a tip-off about people who absconded and worked there. They raided the place in the early hours of February 22, 2020. The victim fled with another girl to escape the raid, before being picked up by Bala. He drove them to his condominium, telling them they could stay there, before drinking alcohol with the girls. He raped the victim while she was heavily intoxicated and also engaged in sex acts with the other girl.

Displaced families struggle amid ongoing Israel-Gaza conflict

AP ■ MUWASI

On his key chain, Hassan Nofal keeps the keys to two homes. One is to the house of his grandparents in what is now southern Israel, which he says his family was driven out of by Israeli forces in 1948 and to which they've never been able to return. The other is to Nofal's house in northern Gaza that he had to flee last year after Israel launched its campaign of bombardment and offensives in the territory. Over the nearly nine months since, Nofal and his family have been uprooted four times, driven back and forth across the Gaza Strip to escape the onslaught. Nofal said he is determined to make sure his key doesn't become a keepsake like his grandparents'. “If my house key becomes just a memory with me moving forward, then I don't want to live anymore,” he said. “I must return to my house ... I want



to stay in Gaza and settle in Gaza with my children in our house.” Israel has said Palestinians will eventually be allowed to go back to their homes in Gaza, but it is not clear when. Many homes have been destroyed or heavily damaged. Israel's assault in Gaza, triggered by Hamas' October 7 attack on southern Israel, has driven some 1.9 million of the territory's pre-war population of 2.3 million Palestinians from their homes. Most of

them have been uprooted repeatedly since then, fleeing over and over across the length of the strip to escape a series of ground offensives.

Each time has meant a wrenching move to a new location and a series of crowded, temporary shelters – whether at the homes of extended family, UN schools, or tent camps. Along the way, families have struggled to stay together and keep a few possessions.

Hurricane Beryl kills four, plunges 3 million into darkness in Texas

PTI ■ HOUSTON

At least four people were killed, and nearly three million homes and businesses were left without power as powerful tropical storm Beryl, which brought damaging winds and floods, slammed into Texas early on Monday. Beryl brought Schools, businesses, offices, and financial institutions to a halt soon after it made landfall near Matagorda as a category 1 hurricane, the National Hurricane Centre said on Monday evening. Flooding, rains and tornadoes were possible across portions of eastern Texas, Western Louisiana. Two people were killed after trees fell on homes, and a civilian employee of the Houston Police Department was killed when he was trapped in flood waters. One more person was reported dead in a fire incident.



A detail of down trees on Memorial drive and Wescot street in Houston, on Monday, after Beryl came ashore in Texas as a hurricane and dumped heavy rains downtown. AP/PTI

Officials asked residents to stay home on Monday night as floodwaters from Beryl began to recede, and crews started surveying the damage. “Don't let the clear skies fool you,” Mayor John Whitmire said at a news conference. “There were no immediate reports of widespread structural damages,”

he said. “We still have dangerous circumstances.” Harris County Judge Lina Hidalgo offered a similar message: “We're not out of the woods yet... Let's just wait until tomorrow. Doing a damage assessment on your own property is one thing, but driving around unnecessarily — we really ask that you avoid it.”

Kyiv mourns as rescuers make last-ditch efforts

AP ■ KIVY

Rescue operations stretched into a second day at a major Kyiv children's hospital struck by a Russian missile, Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said on Tuesday, adding that 38 people were killed and almost 200 injured in an intense daytime barrage that smashed into cities across the country. Zelenskyy said on the social platform X that 64 people were hospitalized in the capital as well as 28 in Kryvyi Rih and six in Dnipro — both in central Ukraine. It was Russia's heaviest bombardment of Kyiv in almost four months and one of the deadliest of the war, hitting seven of the city's 10 districts. The strike on the Okhmatdyt children's hospital, which interrupted open-heart surgery and forced young cancer patients to take their treatments outdoors, drew an international outcry. Kyiv city administrators declared Tuesday an official day of mourning. Entertainment events were prohibited and flags lowered in

the capital. Russia denied responsibility for the hospital strike, insisting it doesn't attack civilian targets in Ukraine despite abundant evidence to the contrary, including Associated Press reporting. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov on Tuesday repeated that position, pointing to a Russian Defense Ministry statement that blamed a Ukrainian air defense missile for partially destroying the hospital. The Russian onslaught Monday came on the eve of a NATO summit in Washington where alliance countries are expected to pledge new military and economic support for Ukraine. Earlier on Monday, Russian missiles blasted cities across Ukraine on Monday, damaging the country's largest childrens hospital and other buildings in a fierce assault that interrupted heart surgeries and forced young cancer patients to take their treatments outdoors. At least 31 people were killed, officials said. The daytime barrage targeted five Ukrainian cities



Rescuers and volunteers clean up the rubble and search for victims after a Russian missile hit the Okhmatdyt hospital in Kyiv, Ukraine, on Monday

AP/PTI

with more than 40 missiles of different types, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said on social media. Ukraine's air force said it intercepted 30 missiles. More than 150 people were wounded. It was Russia's heaviest bombardment of Kyiv in almost four months, hitting seven of the city's 10 districts. At least seven people were killed in the capital, including two staff members at the hospital. Strikes in Kryvyi Rih, Zelenskyy's birthplace in central Ukraine, killed 10. The attack on the Okhmatdyt children's hospital caused debris to fall into heart patients' open chests in the middle of surgery. Cancer patients had their beds wheeled into parks and onto the streets. "It is very important that the world should not be silent about it now and that everyone should see what Russia is and what it is doing," Zelenskyy said. Russia denied attacking the hospital and said the strikes hit military targets. The assault unfolded a day before Western leaders who have backed Ukraine were

scheduled to begin a three-day NATO summit in Washington to consider how they can reassure Kyiv of the alliance's unwavering support and offer Ukrainians hope that their country can survive Europe's biggest conflict since World War II. Zelenskyy said during a visit to Poland that he hopes the summit will provide more air defense systems for Ukraine. In a statement, US President Joe Biden called Monday's missile strikes "a horrific reminder of Russia's brutality". "It is critical that the world continues to stand with Ukraine at this important moment and that we not ignore Russian aggression," the statement said. At the hospital in Kyiv, rescuers searched for victims under the rubble of a partially collapsed, two-story wing of the facility. At the main 10-story building, windows and doors were blown out, and walls were blackened. Blood was spattered on the floor in one room. The intensive care unit, operating theatres and oncology departments all were damaged, officials said.

Search on for dozens buried in deadly Indonesian landslide

AP ■ JAKARTA

Rescue workers dug through tons of mud and rubble on Tuesday as they searched for dozens of missing people after a landslide hit an unauthorized gold mining area on Indonesia's Sulawesi island, killing at least 23 people. More than 100 villagers were digging for grains of gold on Sunday in the remote and hilly village of Bone Bolango when tons of mud plunged down the surrounding hills and buried their makeshift camps, said Heriyanto, head of the provincial Search and Rescue Office. Rescuers recovered more bodies on Tuesday in the devastated hamlet where the gold mine is located. "Improved weather allowed us to recover more bodies," said Heriyanto, who goes by a single name like many Indonesians. According to his office, 66 villagers managed to escape from the landslide, 23 were pulled out alive by rescuers, including 18 with injuries, and 23 bodies were recovered, including three

women and a 4-year-old boy. About 35 others were missing, it said. National Disaster Management Agency spokesperson Abdul Muhari said torrential rains that have pounded the mountainous district since Saturday triggered the landslide and broke an embankment, causing floods up to the roofs of houses in five villages in Bone Bolango, which is part of a mountainous district in Gorontalo province. Nearly 300 houses were affected and more than 1,000 people fled for safety. Authorities deployed more than 200 rescuers, including police and military personnel, with heavy equipment to search for the dead and missing in a rescue operation that has been hampered by heavy rains, unstable soil, and rugged, forested terrain, said Afifuddin Ilahude, a local rescue official. "With many missing and some remote areas still unreachable, the death toll is likely to rise," Ilahude said, adding that sniffer dogs were being mobilized in the search. Videos released by the National Search and Rescue

Agency show rescue personnel using farm tools and their bare hands to pull a mud-caked body from the thick mud and placing it in a black bag to take away for burial. Monsoon rains cause frequent landslides and flash floods in Indonesia, an archipelago nation of more than 17,000 islands where millions of people live in mountainous areas or near floodplains. Informal mining operations are common in Indonesia, providing a tenuous livelihood to thousands who labor in conditions with a high risk of serious injury or death. Landslides, flooding and collapses of tunnels are just some of the hazards facing miners. Much of gold ore processing involves highly toxic mercury and cyanide and workers frequently use little or no protection. The country's last major mining-related accident occurred in April 2022, when a landslide crashed onto an illegal traditional gold mine in North Sumatra's Mandailing Natal district, killing 12 women who were looking for gold.

Pak authorises ISI to intercept, trace calls for national security

Islamabad (PTI): The Pakistan government on Tuesday formally authorised the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), the country's premier spy agency, to intercept and trace calls for national security. The Ministry of Information Technology and Telecommunication issued a notification under the Pakistan Telecommunication (Reorganisation) Act, 1996 to this effect. "In exercise of the powers conferred under Section 54... the federal government in the interest of national security and in the apprehension of any offence, is pleased to authorise the officers not below the rank of grade 18 to be nominated from time to time by the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) to intercept calls and messages or to trace calls through any communication system," the notification further read. Sources said that the notification followed after the government of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif formally decided at the cabinet level to allow the ISI to trace and record calls. The decision appears to be a part of the government's efforts to tighten the noose on social media platforms as the opposition Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) used them to approach its supporters despite the narrowing of space on the traditional media.

ment will prioritise and have precedence in the telecommunications system over any licensee to safeguard national defence or security against foreign threats. "The federal government in the interest of national security and in the apprehension of any offence is pleased to authorise the officers [...] to be nominated from time to time by ISI to intercept calls and messages or to trace calls through any communication system," the notification further read. Sources said that the notification followed after the government of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif formally decided at the cabinet level to allow the ISI to trace and record calls. The decision appears to be a part of the government's efforts to tighten the noose on social media platforms as the opposition Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) used them to approach its supporters despite the narrowing of space on the traditional media.

Pak SC reserves judgment in plea about reserved seats allotment

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Pakistan's Supreme Court on Tuesday reserved its judgment in a key petition by the opposition Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) party about getting its due share in the reserved seats in Parliament and provincial assemblies. The appeal was filed after the Election Commission of Pakistan rejected the SIC's plea for awarding its share in the 70 reserved seats in the National Assembly and another 156 in the four provincial assemblies. The SIC became prominent after Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party-supported candidates joined the party after winning the elections as jailed former prime minister Imran Khan's PTI could not contest the polls and was not eligible to claim the seats reserved for women and minorities. The seats were awarded to the winning parties based on proportional representation. The ECP had rejected the SIC plea for reserved seats as it had not contested the elections and got strength when PTI-backed

independently elected candidates joined after the elections. Its appeal against the ECP decision in the Peshawar High Court was also turned down. Subsequently, the party challenged it in the Supreme Court. A 13-member bench headed by Chief Justice Faez Isa and comprising justices Syed Mansoor Ali Shah, Munib Akhtar, Yahya Afridi, Aminuddin Khan, Jamal Mandokhail, Muhammad Ali Mazhar, Ayesha Malik, Athar Minallah, Syed Hasan Rizvi, Shahid Waheed, Irfan Saadat Khan and Naeem Akhtar Afghan heard the case. Chief Justice Isa announced at the conclusion of the proceedings that the panel decided to reserve the verdict for mutual consultation. He did not give any date for the announcement of the judgment, which is expected this week. "We will see if a short judgment can be announced," the chief justice remarked while reserving the judgment. Earlier, the Supreme Court on May 6 in a major relief to the PTI, suspended the Peshawar High Court's decision about rejecting

the SIC plea. Following the ruling, the ECP on May 14 suspended the victory notifications of 77 candidates who belonged to other parties and were declared successful on the reserved seats. The final ruling by the top court in the case would decide the fate of those 77 reserved seats. Though it may not change the current power structure, the changes in the overall number game in the assemblies may impact the law-making process in the country. The problem of the PTI began when just before the general election, it was deprived of its symbol of cricket bat by the ECP for failure to hold the intra-party election according to its Constitution. It forced PTI to field its candidates as independents. PTI candidates joined the SIC to secure a due share in the reserved seats, but the ECP rejected the SIC plea for reserved seats by saying that it had not contested elections and also did not provide a list of candidates for the reserved seats within the stipulated time, which was mandatory.

Suspected attack by Yemen's Houthi rebels targets ship in the Gulf of Aden

Dubai (AP): A suspected attack by Yemen's Houthi rebels targeted a ship in the Gulf of Aden on Tuesday, the latest assault by the group on the crucial maritime trade route. The captain of the ship reported an explosion in close proximity to the vessel off the coast of Nishtun, Yemen, close to the country's border with Oman, the British military's United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations centre said. The ship, whose name and flag were not released, and all crew are safe, the UKMTO said in a warning to mariners. The explosion took place in the farthest reaches of the waterway earlier targeted by the rebels, the centre said. It did not elaborate on what caused the explosion, though the Houthis have been known to use drones and missiles as well as bomb-carrying drone boats. The Houthis did not immediately comment.

However, it can take hours or even days before they acknowledge carrying out an attack. The last reported Houthi attack in the region took place June 28. The rebels have targeted more than 60 vessels by firing missiles and drones in their campaign that has killed a total of four sailors. They seized one vessel and sank two since November. US-led airstrikes have targeted the Houthis since January, with a series of strikes on May 30 killing at least 16 people and wounding 42 others, the rebels say. The Houthis maintain that their attacks target ships linked to Israel, the United States or Britain as part of rebel support for the militant group Hamas in its war against Israel in the Gaza Strip. However, many of the ships attacked have little or no connection to the Israel-Hamas war — including some bound for Iran.

Pakistan PM urges int'l community to recognise 'burden of Afghan refugees'

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

The head of the UN refugee agency Filippo Grandi on Tuesday met with Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif to discuss the situation of millions of Afghan refugees living in uncertainty since Islamabad announced a repatriation plan of what it called "undocumented aliens" last year. During his meeting with Grandi, Commissioner of the UNHCR, Sharif urged the international community to recognise the "burden of Afghan refugees" being shouldered by Pakistan and demonstrate "collective responsibility" to deal with the issue, the Dawn newspaper reported. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) arrived in Pakistan on Sunday on a three-day visit. "The prime minister stressed that the international commu-

nity must recognise the burden being shouldered by Pakistan while hosting such a large refugee population, and demonstrate collective responsibility," a statement from the PM's Office said. The Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leader added that despite numerous challenges, the country had hosted Afghan refugees with exemplary respect and dignity. Sharif sought UNHCR's support in mobilising adequate resources to supplement Pakistan's efforts in this regard, urging the global refugee agency to play its role in coming up with durable solutions to address the situation of Afghan refugees. The prime minister emphasised that the international community needed to be mindful of the socio-economic challenges and security threats that Pakistan was facing,

the Dawn reported. "The UN High Commissioner expressed gratitude for Pakistan's generosity and hospitality in hosting millions of Afghan refugees for the past many decades and assured that UNHCR would continue to work closely with Pakistan to fulfil the basic needs of the Afghan refugees," the statement added. Pakistan launched the first round of repatriation of what it called "undocumented aliens" in November last year. While no official data has been released as to how many of the estimated undocumented Afghans have left their country since November, the newspaper quoting informed sources said that half a million immigrants returned to Afghanistan via Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan in the first round. On Monday, Grandi met with Pakistan's Minister for States and Frontier Regions, Amir

Muqam, and said that UNHCR would organise a global dialogue, most likely in October, to discuss refugee-related issues, the Dawn said. "Pakistan would be specially invited at this occasion," the UNHCR chief said. He expressed the hope that the event will create a new dimension and avenues for the support of refugees across the globe. "Currently, there are 1.45 million registered Afghan citizens card holders and this does not include a great number of unregistered Afghan refugees and other nationals," federal minister Muqam said. He added that it was a "matter of concern" that there was a decline in support for Afghan refugees and development funds for their hosting areas in Pakistan. "We need exclusive, generous and sustainable interventions," he said.

Australia appoints spl envoy to confront rise in antisemitism

AP ■ MELBOURNE

The Australian government named a special envoy on Tuesday to confront a rise in antisemitism across the country since the Israel-Hamas war began. A similar envoy will soon be appointed to challenge Islamophobia in Australia and both will promote social cohesion, Prime Minister Anthony Albanese told reporters at the Sydney Jewish Museum. Albanese's own Sydney office has been targeted with pro-Palestinian graffiti as rival activists clash over the Israeli-Hamas war in Australian cities and university campuses. Albanese appointed Jillian Segal, a Sydney lawyer and business executive, to be "special envoy to combat antisemitism in Australia" for three years. She will consult with community groups and report back to Albanese and Multicultural Affairs Minister Andrew Giles. Segal called statistics on antisemitism in Australia "shocking". Reports of antisemitism spiked 700 per cent immediately after Hamas militants sparked the war in Gaza by attacking Israel on October 7, and are still running 400 per cent to 500 per cent higher than before the

conflict, she said. The reports include Jewish-owned businesses being boycotted and vandalised as well as Jewish artists being excluded or subjected to social media shadow bans that restrict their visibility on platforms, Segal said. Unfortunately there is no single answer to the perennial problem of antisemitism," she said. "But the creation of this role shows a determination by the government to confront this evil and to ensure that it does not erode the goodness that exists in our society," she added. Albanese said a graffiti attack that marked his inner-Sydney office as a Hamas target in December was being taken seriously and acted upon. He also condemned last month's vandalism with spray paint at the Australian National Korean War Memorial and the Australian Vietnam Forces National Memorial in the national capital, Canberra. "I have spoken with members of the Jewish community here, in Melbourne, right around Australia, who have not felt safe, members of the Jewish community whose children are worried about wearing their school uniform in our capital cities," Albanese said.

Taliban's morality police contributing to climate of fear among Afghans: UN

AP ■ NEW YORK

The Taliban's morality police are contributing to a climate of fear and intimidation among Afghans, according to a UN report published Tuesday. Edicts and some of the methods used to enforce them constituted a violation of human rights and fundamental freedoms, the report said. The Taliban set up a ministry for the "propagation of virtue and the prevention of vice" after seizing power in 2021. Since then, the ministry has enforced decrees issued by the Taliban leadership that have a disproportionate impact on women and girls, like dress codes, segregated education

and employment, and having a male guardian when they travel. "The punishments attached to non-compliance with instructions and decrees are often arbitrary, severe and disproportionate," said the report from the UN Mission in Afghanistan. "Sweeping bans with a discriminatory effect on women have been introduced. Human rights violations, as well as the unpredictability of enforcement measures, contribute to a climate of fear and intimidation among segments of the population." The mission said it documented at least 1,033 instances between August 2021 and March 2024 where ministry employees applied force during

the implementation of orders, resulting in the violation of a person's liberty, and physical and mental integrity. "This includes the use of threats, arbitrary arrests and detentions, excessive use of force by de facto law enforcement officials and ill-treatment." These instances mostly affected men, who were punished for allegedly violating Taliban orders or because their female relatives had breached them, according to the report. It said the ministry's role was expanding into other areas of public life, including media monitoring and eradicating drug addiction. "Given the multiple issues outlined in the report, the position expressed by the de facto authorities that

this oversight will be increasing and expanding gives cause for significant concern for all Afghans, especially women and girls," said Fiona Frazer, the head of UNAMA's Human Rights Service. The ministry rejected the UN report, calling its findings false and contradictory. "Decrees and relevant legal documents are issued to reform society and should have their implementation ensured," the ministry said. The mission's report comes a week after a Taliban delegation travelled to Qatar to attend a UN-sponsored meeting on increasing engagement with Afghanistan amid the country's economic challenges and humanitarian crises.

Pak completes bridge at Kartarpur Corridor after 2.5-year delay

Lahore (PTI): Pakistan has finally completed the 420-metre-long bridge at the Kartarpur Corridor zero line after a delay of two-and-a-half years, an official said on Tuesday. The need for the Kartarpur bridge arose from the vulnerability of the zero-line area to flooding, emphasising the importance of constructing a safe and secure passage for the visitors of the Gurdwara Darbar Sahib, Kartarpur Management Unit Deputy Secretary Saifullah Khokhar told PTI. "We have completed the bridge from our side on the zero-line Kartarpur Corridor. Now it is up to India to complete its side of the bridge, especially a 10-foot disputed one," he said. "The bridge

will be functional once the Indian side is completed," Khokhar added. Earlier, flooding incidents had disrupted visitors' movements to the Kartarpur Sahib. The first deadline to complete the construction of the 420-metre-long bridge was December 2021. The construction works, however, had come to a halt temporarily because of some financial constraints and political issues. The Public Development Fund funded the project with an estimated cost of PKR 4.53 million. The Frontier Works Organisation (FWO) and National Engineering Services of Pakistan (Nespak) collaborated to carry out the construction.

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Tender Enquiry No. 1680/EMC/O&M/PC-2566 Dated: 08-07-2024 Chief Engineer/ O&M (P&P Cell-II), GHPT, Lehra Mohabbat, invites E-tender for the Procurement of Leakage Current Analyzer for Surge Arrester, Quantity as per NIT. For detailed NIT & tender specification please refer to https://eproc.punjab.gov.in from 08-07-2024 from 17:00 Hrs. onwards Note: Corrigendum and addendum, if any will be published online at https://eproc.punjab.gov.in GHTP-52/24
76155/12/3080/2023/35462 Dated CHD :- 7/9/2024

Sensex, Nifty hit all-time high

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty rebounded on Tuesday, hitting their fresh record closing levels on the back of gains in auto and FMCG shares and foreign fund inflows. The 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 391.26 points or 0.49 per cent to settle at a new closing peak of 80,351.64. During the day, it jumped 436.79 points or 0.54 per cent to hit a new lifetime high of 80,397.17. The NSE Nifty went up by 112.65 points or 0.46 per cent to 24,433.20 -- its record closing high. During the day, it surged 123.05 points or 0.50 per cent to hit a new record peak of 24,443.60. “Both domestic and global factors continue to drive the market momentum. Currently, consumption sectors like FMCG and auto are leading the gains, buoyed by progress in the monsoon and kharif sowing,” said Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services. Among Sensex shares, Maruti Suzuki India jumped over 6 per cent amid reports that the UP government waived registration taxes on



hybrid cars as part of its initiative to promote environmentally friendly vehicles in the state. Mahindra & Mahindra, Titan, Sun Pharma, ITC, Nestle and Tata Motors were the other big gainers. Reliance Industries, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Bajaj

Finance and JSW Steel were among the laggard. Investors are eagerly awaiting the first-quarter earnings results, which will guide market direction, Nair said, adding, “Additionally, continuous positive FII inflow contributes to the prevailing positive

sentiment.” In the broader market, the BSE midcap gauge climbed 0.36 per cent and smallcap index went up by 0.22 per cent. Among the indices, auto jumped 2.17 per cent. Consumer durables (2.01 per cent), realty (1.23 per cent),

consumer discretionary (1.21 per cent), healthcare (1 per cent) and utilities (0.76 per cent) also closed higher. Telecommunication, capital goods and teck were the laggards. A total of 2,010 stocks advanced while 1,924 declined and 92 remained unchanged on the BSE. Also, 320 stocks hit their upper circuit limit while 242 firms hit the lower circuit levels. The market capitalisation of BSE-listed firms on Tuesday hit a fresh lifetime high of Rs 451.27 lakh crore. In Asian markets, Seoul, Tokyo and Shanghai settled higher while Hong Kong ended lower. European markets were trading mostly lower. US markets ended mostly higher on Monday. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) bought equities worth Rs 60.98 crore on Monday, according to exchange data. Global oil benchmark Brent crude declined 0.51 per cent to USD 85.31 a barrel. The BSE benchmark declined 36.22 points or 0.05 per cent to settle at 79,960.38 on Monday. The NSE Nifty dipped 3.30 points or 0.01 per cent to 24,320.55. In August 2021, the central

Financial inclusion index rises with growth across all segments: RBI

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Index, capturing the extent of financial inclusion across the country, rose to 64.2 in March 2024, showing growth across all parameters. The index captures information on various aspects of financial inclusion in a single value ranging between 0 and 100, where 0 represents complete financial exclusion and 100 indicates full financial inclusion. “The value of the index for March 2024 stands at 64.2 vis-à-vis 60.1 in March 2023, with growth witnessed across all sub-indices,” the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) said in a statement on Tuesday. Improvement in FI-Index is mainly contributed by usage dimension, reflecting deepening of financial inclusion, it added. The FI-Index comprises three broad parameters — access (35 per cent), usage (45 per cent), and quality (20 per cent) — with each of these consisting of various dimensions, which are computed based on a number of indicators. In August 2021, the central



bank said FI-Index has been conceptualised as a comprehensive index, incorporating details of banking, investments, insurance, postal, as well as the pension sector, in consultation with government and respective sectoral regulators. The index is responsive to ease of access, availability and usage of services, and quality of services. According to RBI, a unique feature of the index is the quality parameter which captures the quality aspect of financial inclusion as reflected by financial literacy, consumer protection and inequalities and deficiencies in services.

Rupee gains 1 paisa to 83.49 against US dollar

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The rupee inched up one paisa to 83.49 (provisional) against the US dollar on Tuesday as gains from strong domestic equities and sliding global crude prices were negated by a surging greenback overseas. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the rupee started slightly up at 83.49 and hit an intra-day high of 83.47 and a low of 83.51 against the American currency during the session. It finally settled at 83.49 against the dollar, registering a gain of one paisa over the previous close. On Monday, the rupee settled at 83.50 against the US dollar. “Indian rupee gained today on optimism as Nifty touched fresh all-time highs and fresh FII inflows. A decline in crude oil prices also supported the rupee. However, a positive US dollar capped sharp gains. The US dollar gained on weak Euro amid political uncertainty in France,” Anuj Choudhary, Research Analyst at Sharekhan by BNP Paribas, said. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, rose 0.06 per cent to 104.72.

Govt may relax 45 days payment rule for MSMEs in Budget

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The government may relax the requirement of making payments to MSMEs within 45 days of buying goods and services to check large corporate from looking at other sourcing avenues, sources said. The announcement to this effect could be made in the Budget likely to be presented on July 23. The government is considering suggestions regarding changes to Section 43B(h) of the Income Tax Act made by MSMEs during pre-Budget consultations, sources said. The government in last year's Budget added a new clause under Section 43B of the Income Tax Act to address the challenge of delayed payments faced by MSMEs in the country. According to Section 43B(h) of the Income Tax Act, introduced through the Finance Act 2023, if a larger company does not pay an MSME on time — within 45 days in case of written agreements — it cannot deduct that expense from its taxable income, leading to potentially higher taxes. MSMEs fear that due to this provision, large buyers could cold-shoulder MSME suppliers and start buying either from those MSMEs that are not registered with Udyam or from non-MSMEs. The amendment was brought



in for MSMEs to get timely payment, but there are a lot of fear were raised by them, sources said, adding that they feared that large corporate, in bid to safeguard their interest, can shift their sourcing requirement to bigger firms or ask their vendors to give up their MSME registration to do business with them. Earlier in May, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had said the changes, if any, to the rule will have to be done in the full Budget in July under the new government as per the representations submitted by MSMEs. The MSME sector accounts for 30 per cent of the country's gross domestic product (GDP) and the second largest employer after agriculture. The share of exports from products specified for MSMEs constituted 45.56 per cent of the country's total exports.

Temasek expects India growth to remain firm over next 2 yrs

PTI ■ SINGAPORE

Singapore investor Temasek expects India's growth to remain firm over the next two years, driven by infrastructure-led capital expenditure, and a recovery in private consumption. Temasek on Tuesday reported an SGD 7 billion rise in its Net Portfolio Value (NPV) to SGD 389 billion for the financial year ended March 31, 2024, mainly driven by gains to the US and India investments. India has continued to see strong economic momentum alongside improving macro and political stability, the

company said in a statement. “We expect growth to remain firm over the next two years, primarily driven by infrastructure-led capital expenditure, accelerated supply chain diversification, and a recovery in private consumption,” Temasek said. Temasek said its Net Portfolio Value (NPV) rose by SGD 7 billion to SGD 389 billion for the financial year ended March 31, 2024. “The increase was mainly driven by gains to the US and India, offset by the underperformance of China's capital markets,” it said.



Temasek said it maintained a cautious but steady investment pace amidst

global economic uncertainties, and invested SGD 26 billion into

opportunities in sectors such as technology, financial services, sustainability, consumer, and healthcare, aligned with the four structural trends of digitisation, sustainable living, future of consumption, and longer lifespans. Excluding Singapore, the US continued to be the leading destination for Temasek capital, followed by India and Europe while it has also stepped-up investment activities in Japan. Temasek divested SGD 33 billion for the year. Of this, about SGD 10 billion was due to the redemption of

capital by Singapore Airlines and Pavilion Energy for their mandatory convertible bonds and preferential shares respectively. Overall, Temasek had a net divestment of SGD 7 billion, compared to a net investment of SGD 4 billion a year ago. “We invested in Electric Vehicle companies Mahindra Electric Automobile in India and BYD in China, sustainable battery solutions provider Ascend Elements in the US, and electrolyser manufacturer Electric Hydrogen in the US,” it added.

Khadi and Village Industries’ annual turnover crossed ₹1.5 lakh crore

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Khadi and Village Industries’ annual turnover crossed Rs 1.5 lakh crore for the first time in FY 2023-24 with over 10 lakh new jobs generated during the fiscal, its Chairman Manoj Kumar said on Tuesday. According to provisional figures for 2023-24 released by KVIC, a 315 per cent increase in production and a 400 per cent rise in sales were registered in the last 10 years. New employment generation also witnessed an 81 per cent increase during the decade starting from 2013-14. “For the first time, over 10 lakh new jobs were created and our turnover crossed Rs 1.5 lakh crore in 2023-24,” Kumar said. Surpassing all previous figures, there has been an increase of almost 400 per cent in sales, nearly 315 per cent in production, and 81 per cent in

new employment generation compared to the financial year 2013-14, KVIC stated. KVIC's sales were Rs 1.34 lakh crore in 2022-23. “The production of Khadi and village industry products, which was Rs. 26,109.08 crores in the financial year 2013-14, reached Rs. 108,297.68 crores in the financial year 2023-24, a jump of 314.79 per cent, while the production in the financial year 2022-23 was Rs. 95956.67 crores. This continuously increasing production is strong evidence that the Khadi and Village Industries Commission has done historical work in rural areas,” KVIC said. “In the financial year 2023-24, KVIC's efforts have created 10.17 lakh new jobs in rural areas, strengthening rural India's economy,” it stated. The KVIC Chairman said the demand for Khadi and village industry products made by rural artisans is increasing.

Sebi invites public comments on proposed amendments to REIT, InvIT rules

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Capital markets regulator Sebi on Tuesday said it has sought public views on the proposed amendments to the master circulars for REITs and InvITs. In a consultation paper, Sebi said these amendments will provide clarity on the nomination rights of directors to the boards of REIT (Real Estate Investment Trusts) and InvIT (Infrastructure Investment Trusts) managers. In the proposed amendments, the markets watchdog has addressed market participants’ requests for clarification on the rights of unitholders to nominate a director to the board of the investment manager or manager of REITs and InvITs.



The changes propose that the restriction on nominating a unitholder nominee director will not apply if the right to appoint a nominee director is available as per the Sebi (Debenture Trustees) regulations. Under the current norms, a unitholder holding a significant portion of units in

an InvIT or REIT has the right to nominate a director, provided their unitholding exceeds a specified threshold. “It has been represented by market participants to provide clarity on the availability of the right to nominate a director on the Board of Directors of the Investment Manager of InvIT

/ Manager of REIT, to a unitholder where such nomination right is also available to a unitholder in the capacity of lender to the Investment Manager / Manager or the InvIT/REIT (or its HoldCo(s) or SPVs),” Sebi said. “...It is proposed to amend the Master Circular for InvITs dated May 15, 2024 and Master Circular for REITs dated May 15, 2024 to provide that the restriction relating to the right to nominate a Unitholder Nominee Director shall not be applicable if the right to appoint a nominee director is available in terms of the Sebi (Debenture Trustees) regulations,” it added. Sebi has invited public comments and suggestions on the draft circulars till July 29.

ONGC to invest ₹2 lakh cr to meet net zero emission target

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

State-owned Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) will invest about Rs 2 lakh crore in setting up renewable energy sites and green hydrogen plants and cutting gas flaring to zero to achieve its 2038 net-zero carbon emission goal. The company, which produces about two-thirds of India's crude oil and about 58 per cent of natural gas, on Tuesday released a 200-page document, detailing its path to achieving net zero emissions. It listed clean energy projects even as it looks to boost its hydrocarbon output to meet the country's energy needs. ONGC will invest Rs 97,000 crore by 2030 in setting up 5 gigawatts of renewable energy capacity, green hydrogen, biogas, pump storage plant and offshore



wind project, according to the document. Another Rs 65,500 crore will be invested by 2035, mostly in a green hydrogen or green ammonia plant, and the remaining Rs 38,000 crore by 2038, primarily in setting up 1 GW of offshore wind projects. These projects will help the firm offset 9 million tonnes

of carbon emissions it is directly (Scope-1 emissions) or indirectly (Scope-2 emissions) responsible for. ONGC said it will invest Rs 5,000 crore to cut gas flaring to zero by 2030 through technological intervention. The firm released into the atmosphere 554 million cubic metres of methane in

2021-22 (base year), mostly because it was an incidental by-product of oil or the quantity was not economical enough to pipe it to consumers. ONGC will spend Rs 30,000 crore in setting up 5 GW solar parks that will convert sunlight into electricity and turbines that will do the same with wind energy. It will add 1 GW of solar and onshore wind capacity by 2035 and 2038 at a cost of Rs 5,000 crore each. It will invest Rs 40,000 crore by 2030 and a similar amount by 2035 to set up two 1,80,000 tonnes per annum green hydrogen and/or 1 million tonnes of green ammonia projects. ONGC, which has installations in the Arabian Sea and Bay of Bengal to produce oil and gas from below the seabed, is also looking at installing offshore wind turbines to generate

0.5 GW of electricity by 2030 and double it by 2035. The first 0.5 GW offshore wind project is likely to cost Rs 12,500 crore and the next about Rs 12,000 crore. By 2038, it will add another 1 GW of offshore wind energy capacity at an investment of Rs 25,000 crore, the document said. The company is also looking at investing Rs 20,000 crore for setting up 3 GW of pump storage plants to meet electricity requirements when renewable sources like sunlight and wind energy are not available. The remaining investment will be in biogas, carbon capture and other clean energy projects. All this while it continues to hunt and produce more oil and gas. Crude oil, which companies like ONGC pump out from below the seabed and from underground reservoirs, is a primary source of energy. It

is processed in oil refineries to produce petrol, diesel and jet fuel. With the world looking to transition away from fossil fuels, companies around the globe are looking at new avenues to use crude oil. Gas produced in a similar fashion is used to generate electricity, produce fertiliser or convert into CNG to power automobiles or into PNG to fire kitchen stoves. Scope 1 emissions are from directly emitting sources that are owned or controlled by a company. Scope 2 emissions are from the consumption of purchased electricity, steam, or other sources of energy generated upstream from a company's direct operations. ONGC produced 21.14 million tonnes of oil in 2023-24 (April 2023 to March 2024) and 20.648 billion cubic metres (bcm) of gas.

Taiwan Expo India 2024 kicks off

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The three-day Taiwan Expo India 2024 which kicked off here from Tuesday at Bharat Mandapam has over 60 companies presenting cutting-edge solutions in smart manufacturing, green sustainability, healthy living, and smart city development. The event serves as a crucial platform for exploring advancements in green energy and smart technology, facilitating collaborations between Taiwanese innovators and Indian stakeholders. However, it is the Taiwan Excellence Pavilion featuring products from 24 Taiwanese brands across AI application, ICT, industrial applications, lifestyle, and medical sectors which is drawing a large



number of visitors since the inauguration of Expo on Tuesday here. The inauguration kicked off with a dynamic product launch session, spotlighting HERO products from industry leaders like ADVANTECH, GIGABYTE, Mbran Filtra, MSI, and Zyxel. Additionally, 19 other prominent brands such as AVer, CHIMEI MOTOR, CyberPower, and EverFocus are showcasing their world-class offerings, underscoring Taiwan's prowess in innovation and technology.

TEST OF TIME FOR GUKESH TO EXCEL IN FASTER VERSION

Gujrathi joins in as a wild card in Zagreb

PTI ■ ZAGREB (CROATIA)

World Championship challenger D Gukesh will look to improve his billing in the faster version as Vidit Gujrathi joins him for the Superunited rapid and blitz chess tournament, a part of the Grand Chess Tour.

Set to meet Chinese Ding Liren in Singapore from November 20th to decide the next world champion, Gukesh has repeatedly proved his superior ability in the Classical format. But when it comes to faster version, the Indian is yet to find his place amongst the world elite.

The fact remains that in case of a tied result in the World

Championship, there will be games under faster time control of rapid and blitz chess to determine the winner and Gukesh would like to set the record straight like American Fabiano Caruana just did a few days back in Bucharest when he won the tiebreaker by a mile winning his games against Gukesh, R Praggnanandhaa and Alireza Firouzja of France.

Gujrathi, who has got a wildcard, will be the other Indian in the fray in the USD 175000 prize money tournament that will have nine rounds under rapid and 18 under blitz chess rules.

With each win worth two points in rapid and one under the blitz rules, it remains to be seen who will be the master of Zagreb but



the odds are in favour of top seed Caruana who will look forward to notching back-to-back wins on the tour.

Ian Nepomniachtchi from Russia and Alireza are another two players who can turn the tide in their favour on their day and here they have five playing days to prove their true mettle.

Wesley So of America, Maxime Vachier-Lagrave of France and Anish Giri of Holland are the other three in contention while local star Ivan Saric and another American Levon Aronian complete the ten-player line up.

So remains dangerous but is clearly struggling with form while Vachier-Lagrave has to prove himself yet again.

Levon Aronian led his team to a triumph in the last Global Chess League in Dubai but the former Armenian is clearly past his best.

Giri, on the other hand, has had mixed success in faster version and will like to end it on a high.

All eyes will be on Gujrathi if he can replicate his magic. Gujrathi had come out as one of the best prepared players in the last Candidates tournament and there is every chance that he will spring a few surprises here.

Players: D Gukesh, Vidit Gujrathi (Ind); Fabiano Caruana, Levon Aronian, Wesley So (Usa); Alireza Firouzja, Maxime Vachier-Lagrave (Fra); Ian Nepomniachtchi (Fid); Ivan Saric (Cro); Anish Giri (Ned).

Bradley appointed US Ryder Cup captain after Woods turns down job

AP ■ NEW YORK

Keegan Bradley is assured of making another Ryder Cup team, this time as the U.S. Captain. The PGA of America announced his selection after months of talking with Tiger Woods about taking the job.

The PGA of America released the news on Instagram after word began to leak during the day that Bradley, who has played on only two Ryder Cup teams and never was an assistant captain, was chosen to lead the 2025 matches at Bethpage Black in New York.

Bradley already was in New York going through media training, with a news conference to introduce him set for noon Tuesday at the NASDAQ building. At age 38, he will be the youngest American captain since Arnold Palmer was a playing captain in 1963 at East Lake.

Sports Illustrated was first to

report that Bradley would be the next captain.

Woods was the first choice of the Ryder Cup committee and had been in negotiations for months about what the job would entail and whether he had time to fulfill the duties, many of them involving promotion of the event.

While he plays only a limited schedule, Woods is the vice chairman of the commercial PGA Tour Enterprises board as it tries to hammer out an investment deal with the Saudi backers of rival LIV Golf.

He was a playing captain for the 2019 Presidents Cup when the Americans won at Royal Melbourne, and he served as an assistant Ryder Cup captain at Hazeltine in 2016.

"I'm dedicating so much time to what we're doing with the PGA Tour. I don't want to not fulfill the role of the captaincy if I can't do it," Woods had said



in May at the PGA Championship.

Once Woods wasn't an option, the PGA of America went for some local flavor with Bradley. He is a New England native who played his college golf at St. John's.

"Keegan's past Ryder Cup experience, strong

relationships and unwavering passion for this event will prove invaluable as he guides the U.S. Team over the next year-and-a-half," PGA of America President John Lindert said.

"We are confident that with Keegan at the helm, the 2025 U.S. Ryder Cup team will compete at Bethpage with the same confidence and determination that has defined his career."

Bradley has six PGA Tour victories, including the 2011 PGA Championship. Two of those victories came last season, and Bradley figured it might be enough for him to make another Ryder Cup team.

He was devastated when U.S. Captain Zach Johnson overlooked him with his four captain's picks, going with Rickie Fowler, Justin Thomas, Jordan Spieth and Brooks Koepka.

The prototype of Ryder Cup captains typically is a player

just outside the prime of his career, usually in the mid-40s.

And ever since players gained a stronger voice in selecting captains after the 2014 matches, the model has been for future captains to first serve as assistants at the Ryder Cup or Presidents Cup.

The template also is for the immediate past captain - Johnson in this case - to be an assistant at the next Ryder Cup.

With so much outside-the-box thinking on the Bradley selection, it was not immediately clear if that was still true.

Bradley last played in the Ryder Cup at Gleneagles in Scotland in 2014, when Tom Watson benched him and Phil Mickelson for both Saturday sessions in another European victory.

Bradley made his Ryder Cup debut in Medinah in 2012, teaming with Mickelson to go 3-0 before losing to Rory

McIlroy in singles in what turned out to be a European victory, the largest comeback by a visiting team.

He famously did not unpack his bag from the 2012 matches and said he would not open it until he was on a winning team. Now he might get that chance.

"My passion and appreciation for golf's greatest team event have never been stronger," Bradley said in a news release.

"The Ryder Cup is unlike any other competition in our sport, and this edition will undoubtedly be particularly special given the rich history and enthusiastic spectators at this iconic course. I look forward to beginning preparations for 2025."

This is the latest the Americans have selected a captain in more than 30 years. It was never supposed to take this long or be this complicated.

Photo of a young Messi with Lamine as a baby resurfaces after almost 17 years

AP ■ BARCELONA

When Joan Monfort took photos of Lionel Messi with a baby for a charity calendar almost 17 years ago, he knew the long-haired young man would make it big in soccer.

He could not have imagined the little boy would as well.

The baby in the photos - which have gone viral - was none other than Lamine Yamal, the Spanish wunderkind, who at 16 is showing such promise that he's already being compared to the greats.

The youngest to have played for Spain, he became the youngest player ever in the ongoing European Championship in Germany.

The long-forgotten photo from 2007 resurfaced after Yamal's father posted it on Instagram last week with the text "the beginning of two legends."

Monfort, 56, who works as a freelance photographer for The Associated Press and others, said the photo shoot took place in the visitors' locker room at Barcelona's Camp Nou in the autumn of 2007, when Yamal was just a few months old.

Barcelona players posed with children and their families for a calendar as part of an annual charity drive by local newspaper Diario Sport and UNICEF.

Monfort was in charge of the photo shoots - and it just so happened that Messi was paired with Yamal's family.

His mother, who is from Equatorial Guinea, is next to Messi and the baby in one of the photos.

"We made the calendar with the help of UNICEF. So UNICEF did a raffle in the

neighborhood of Roca Fonda in Mataró where Lamine's family lived. They signed up for the raffle to have their picture taken at the Camp Nou with a Barca player. And they won the raffle," Monfort said.

It wasn't an easy assignment, he recalled, mainly because Messi wasn't sure how to interact with baby Lamine, who was in a plastic tub for the shoot.

"Messi is a pretty introverted guy, he's shy," Monfort said. "He was coming out of the locker room and suddenly he finds himself in another locker room with a plastic tub full of water and a baby in it. It was complicated. He didn't even know how to hold him at first."

Messi was 20 at the time and already considered a big talent, but it would take a couple of years before he made his mark as the most outstanding player of his generation for Barcelona and Argentina.

Like Messi, Yamal has gone through Barcelona's renowned La Masia youth academy. Despite his age, he's been one of Spain's best players at Euro 2024, where his team will play France in the semifinals on Tuesday.

Yamal will turn 17 on Saturday, the day before the final in Berlin.

Monfort, 56, had no idea it was Yamal in those photos from 2007 until a friend messaged him as they started trending online.

He's had a long career as a sports photographer since 1991, following Barcelona around the world, but said he's never experienced this level of excitement around any of his photos.

With plenty of swimming stars at 2024 Olympics, France's Marchand may shine brightest

AP ■ NEW YORK

Most of the big stars from the last Olympics will be back at the pool in Paris.

Caeleb Dressel. Katie Ledecky. Ariarne Titmus. Emma McKeon.

But the local favorite might just shine brightest of them all.

France's Léon Marchand has drawn comparisons to the great Michael Phelps, a link that was only strengthened by Phelps' longtime coach, Bob Bowman, overseeing the 22-year-old's rise to prominence.

At last summer's world championships in Fukuoka, Marchand broke Phelps' 15-year-old world record in the 400-meter individual medley, to go along with victories in the 200 IM and 200 butterfly - two more of Phelps' signature events.

"Leon has several things that make him a great," Bowman said. "He has speed and he has endurance. So he kind of has the whole package that you want, and so far he's done well under pressure, which is the other piece of that equation. He has it all really."

Marchand will also have the home-pool advantage in Paris, where the swimming will be contested in a temporary facility set up inside the La Défense Arena, the 30,000-seat home of the



rugby club Racing 92.

The place figures to be especially loud every time Marchand steps up on the blocks.

"I get to swim the (400) IM against the world record holder in his home country," said Carson Foster, the top American hopeful. "That atmosphere is going to be electric."

Marchand, who swam for Bowman at Arizona State, competed in four events at the Tokyo Games, with a best showing of sixth in the 400 individual medley.

But he emerged as one of the sport's rising stars at the 2022 world championships in Budapest, and his performance the following year in Fukuoka only raised the stakes heading into his home-country Olympics.

"When I came back from Tokyo, I was like, Damn, this is like a game-changer. Now I can actually beat those guys pretty soon," Marchand said.

"I know I can train better. I know I can improve this."

D O P I N G CONCERNSSwimming has faced many doping scandals over the years, going all the way back to the East Germans' rise to prominence in the 1970s that was powered by state-sponsored doping.

Now, all eyes are on the Chinese after reports that nearly two dozen of their top swimmers tested positive for banned substances ahead of the Tokyo Olympics but were allowed to compete. Five of those swimmers went on to win medals, including three golds.

It was also revealed that three

of those same Chinese swimmers had previously tested positive for a different substance but faced no ramifications.

Ledecky said many swimmers have lost faith in the World Anti-Doping Agency and can't help but wonder if the competition in Paris will be fair.

Phelps, who won a record 23 gold medals during his career, went before the U.S. Congress to express his concerns.

"It is clear to me that any attempts of reform at WADA have fallen short, and there are still deeply rooted, systemic problems that prove detrimental to the integrity of international sports and athletes' right to fair competition, time and time again," he said.

BIG RIVALSThe United States and Australia have long been the world's most prominent swimming nations, fueling a rivalry that will heat up again in Paris.

While the Americans traditionally have the deepest team, the Aussies have proven to be formidable foes in recent years - especially on the women's side.

At the 2023 worlds, the team from Down Under captured 13 gold medals in swimming.

The U.S. Won seven, though it did lead the overall medals table 38-25.

Rodri calls for more protection for players after Spain teammate's Euro 2024 is ended

AP ■ MUNICH

Rodri has called for more protection for players after one of his Spain teammates was ruled out of the rest of the European Championship.

Pedri's tournament was ended after the midfielder sustained a knee injury last Friday in a hefty challenge by Toni Kroos at the start of the quarterfinal against Germany, which La Roja went on to win 2-1.

Spain coach Luis de la Fuente said Kroos should have been sent off in the final match of his illustrious career. He did not even receive a yellow card.

"As football players, we always want to be protected," Rodri said on Monday. "This is the job of the referee."

"I mean, he puts the standard, so what is a yellow card or red card is his job. It's not our job. And we play with the rules or with the level he put. This is the reality."

Rodri, considered the best defensive midfielder in the world, is expecting another hard-fought encounter in Tuesday's semifinal against France.

"Tomorrow is going to be a very, very physical battle because they are a very physical team. So we will have to go in the same way, try to be



strong, use the body, because we know the power they have," he said.

Germany coach Julian Nagelsmann had said before the quarterfinal that his players would try to make life hard for Spain wonderkid Lamine Yamal. And tackles were flying in right from the start in Stuttgart on Friday.

A pragmatic De la Fuente said the 16-year-old Yamal has to get used to it.

"It's part of football, it's part of the game," he said. "There are ways to gain an edge through playing or with intimidatory tactics. Each one uses their tools, always within a disciplinary regime imposed by the referee."

"You have to explain to a 16-year-old kid that he needs to see that reality. Lamine has to continue being him and learn that this is how it is.

Djokovic gets into it with Wimbledon fans after reaching the quarterfinals

AP ■ LONDON

Maybe the Centre Court spectators were saluting Novak Djokovic's opponent by saying his name. Maybe they were booing Djokovic, trying to rattle him. The 24-time Grand Slam champion was sure it was the latter - and he let everyone know he was not happy about it.

Djokovic easily beat 15th-seeded Holger Rune 6-3, 6-4, 6-2 in just over two hours Monday night to reach the Wimbledon quarterfinals, then made sure to get a message across to those fans he thought were against him.

Rune's supporters at various tournaments often will stretch out his last name, saying, "Ruuuuuune!" - which sounds rather similar to

"Boooooo!" - and that happened again Monday.

During his on-court postmatch interview, Djokovic spoke briefly about the match, but then veered into a discussion about the people in the stands.

"To all the fans that have respect and that stayed here tonight: Thank you very much from the bottom of my heart. I appreciate it. And to all those people that have chosen to disrespect the player - in this case, me - have a gooooooood night. Gooooood night. Gooooood night. Very goooooood night," he said, stretching out the "Os" in "good" so they sounded like "boo."

The interviewer tried to dissuade Djokovic from thinking anyone was trying to

taunt him.

"They were. They were. They were. I don't accept it. I know they were cheering for Rune. But that's an excuse to also boo," Djokovic said. "Listen, I've been on the tour for more than 20 years. So trust me, I know all the tricks. I know how it works. It's fine. It's fine. It's OK. I focus on the respectful people, that have respect, that paid (for) a ticket to watch tonight - and love tennis. And love tennis. And appreciate the players and the effort that the players put in here."

At his news conference later, Djokovic was asked whether he thinks the All England Club should do something to curb rowdy fan behavior.

"Look, I don't know what Wimbledon can really do



about it. I mean, in those particular moments when it happens, the crowd paid their tickets. They have the right to be there and cheer the way they want to cheer. That's absolutely something they choose - how they behave or how they choose to support the player is really up to them," Djokovic responded.

"Yes, you could argue maybe a chair umpire or whoever can step in in certain moments and calm them down, but there's not much you can do. You're not going to take out the whole section of the crowd or stadium because they're misbehaving or showing disrespect."

Rune - who got off to a terrible start in the match, dropping the first 12 points - didn't make much of it all.

"If you don't know what was happening, probably it sounded like boo," he said.

"He was just better than me today," Rune said. "Whether the crowd was this or that, I think it was great support for both players, to be honest."

When the match ended, Djokovic gestured as if he were playing a violin, maybe mockingly indicating he felt bad for anyone in the arena that he had saddened by winning and getting to the quarterfinals at the All England Club for the 15th time.

He has won the championship at Wimbledon seven times and was the runner-up to Carlos Alcaraz last year.

"I played in much more hostile environments, trust me," Djokovic said.

BUMRAH, MANDHANA NAMED ICC PLAYER OF MONTH FOR JUNE



PTI ■ DUBAI

Hero of India's victorious T20 World Cup campaign, Jasprit Bumrah added another feather to his hat when he was on Tuesday named the 'ICC Men's Player of the Month for June'. It was double delight for India as women's team vice-captain Smriti Mandhana was also named the 'Women's Player of the Month' by the global body.

Mandhana won her first ICC Women's Player of the Month after playing a starring role in India's sweep over South Africa in the ODI series last month. Bumrah came out on top in the men's vote from compatriot Rohit Sharma and Rahmanullah Gurbaz of Afghanistan, while Mandhana won the women's award by overcoming England's Maia Bouchier and Sri Lanka's Vishmi Gunaratne.



Bumrah, who bagged 15 wickets to be adjudged the Player-of-the-Tournament in the T20 global showpiece last month, also claimed the Men's Player of the Month accolade for June, the ICC announced. "I am delighted to be named the ICC Men's Player of the Month for June," Bumrah said in the ICC statement. "It's a special honour for me following a memorable few weeks spent in the USA and West Indies. We have had a

lot to celebrate as a team, and I'm delighted to be able to add this personal accolade to the list." The 30-year-old was at his dependable best in the USA and Caribbean and bowled at an average of 8.26, at an astonishing economy rate of 4.17. He joined Virat Kohli (a two-time winner in his own right) as India players to claim the Men's T20 World Cup Player of the Tournament award. India were the first team to

win the men's T20 World Cup without losing a game all tournament. Barring a washout against Canada in the first round, the Rohit Sharma-led India went on to win all eight matches they played in the tournament. "To perform as well as we did at the tournament and lift the trophy at the end is incredibly special, and I will carry those memories with me forever," Bumrah said. "I wish to congratulate my

captain Rohit Sharma and Rahmanullah Gurbaz for their excellent performances in the same period, and I am humbled to have been chosen as the winner." In the women's game, Mandhana set the tone with a commanding 117 in the first outing in Bengaluru. Despite an early stutter by the hosts in which they fell to 99 for five, Mandhana remained resolute, and benefitted from some lower order resistance to guide India to a formidable score of 265 from their 50 overs, which proved far beyond the Proteas. Mandhana went one better in the second match, hitting her second successive century and top scoring in a game that saw 646 runs in total. The opener blitzed the South African bowling attack, smashing 136 in 120 balls and in tandem with her captain Harmanpreet Kaur, posted just enough to see off the resurgent visitors. She came close to sealing a hat-trick of hundreds in the final outing, falling agonizingly on 90 in a stylish effort that ensured India recorded a comfortable victory to close out the series. During the period, Mandhana recorded 343 runs at an average of 114.33, with a strike rate of over 100, earning her the Player of the Series award. "I'm really glad to have won the ICC Women's Player of the Month for June. I'm really happy with the way the team has performed and I'm happy to have contributed. For us, we won the ODI and the Test series and hopefully we can continue our form and I can further contribute to win more matches for India," Mandhana said.

SLC denies report of drinking party inside team hotel during recent T20 World Cup

PTI ■ COLOMBO

The Sri Lankan Cricket Board on Tuesday described a media report which claimed that its players were involved in a drinking party inside team hotel during the recent T20 World Cup as "entirely false, fabricated, and baseless". A weekend newspaper had on July 7 claimed that the Sri Lankan players had a drinking party inside the team hotel before the match against South Africa, which the islanders lost by six wickets in New York on June 3. "Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC) wishes to issue the following clarification regarding an inaccurate article titled 'Drinking Party Inside Team Hotel Before South Africa Match?' published in a weekend newspaper on July 7th and subsequently circulated on social media. "SLC categorically and strongly

refutes the contents of the article and confirms that no such incidents, as described, have occurred. Therefore, SLC states unequivocally that the news report is entirely false, fabricated, and baseless," the SLC said in a statement. Sri Lanka secured only one victory at the T20 World Cup, defeating the Netherlands. The islanders were eliminated in the group stage as they finished third after losing to South Africa and Bangladesh, while their game against Nepal was washout out. "We vehemently believe that such false reporting unfairly damages the reputation of Sri Lanka Cricket, its officials, and the players," the SLC added. "In light of the said false allegations, Sri Lanka Cricket has requested that the respective newspaper publish a 'Right of Reply' to address and rectify the damage caused to Sri Lanka Cricket."

It will be tough to step into Kohli's shoes, says Gaikwad

PTI ■ HARARE

India batter Ruturaj Gaikwad knows well that it will be "tough" and "hard" to replace retired Virat Kohli at number three spot in T20Is and said he is just focusing on making valuable contributions with the bat in whatever position the team leadership deems fit. The retirement of Kohli, skipper Rohit Sharma and all-rounder Ravindra Jadeja from the shortest format following the T20 World Cup triumph has opened the doors for the upcoming players and Gaikwad is one such talented batter who has the potential to seal the No. 3 spot. "This is a big topic and I think it's not the right point to think about it. To even compare with him (Kohli) or try to fill in his shoes is relatively very tough and very

hard," Gaikwad said on the eve of the third T20I against Zimbabwe. "As I had said in the IPL as well, it is difficult to fill my best shoes as well. Definitely, you want to start your career, you want to start the way you want, you want to play your own game. So that's the priority right now. "Focus on one game, focus on how you can contribute towards the team in whichever position you play and make sure you are on the winning side more often than not." Gaikwad has batted at No. 3 position for India in the first two T20Is against Zimbabwe but the Pune-born cricketer said he has no preference and will bat wherever the team requires him. "No, wherever the team wants, I will bat there. There is no problem. There is not much difference between the

opening and the number 3 because you have to play the new ball. So there is not much difference," he said. Gaikwad led the Chennai Super Kings in the IPL this year and he said captaincy has made him to get more involved in the game though it didn't make any difference to his batting. "Actually, to be honest, nothing has changed much. Because my batting has been the same as before. I have to play with responsibility and try and finish it on my own," he said. "It's just that the way you look at the game, I think every first time you are more involved now in the game since you have captained the IPL franchise for a long period of time. "So you tend to be into the game for a longer period of time instead of just staying in the boundary outside and just

focusing on one ball. As I said, batting wise it's not made much difference." Young opener Abhishek Sharma had spoken about how Gaikwad helped him in "keeping perspective" as he went hammer and tongs to blast a match-winning 47-ball 100 in the second T20I. "Actually, communication is not from a senior player," Gaikwad said. "It comes from a batting partner because obviously with non-strikers you feel something about a particular bowler or particular conditions and you have to have that confidence to go and share with your partner whatever you feel and what are the right options, what to do in certain situations. "Definitely this is something which I have been doing it being part of all the teams whether state team, IPL team or Indian team as well..."



Retired Warner says he is open to play Champions Trophy next year

PTI ■ SYDNEY

David Warner has declared his international career a "closed chapter" but at the same time, the Australian batting great won't mind padding up in the Champions Trophy next year should he be selected, something that has been described as an "emergency option" by his ODI captain Pat Cummins. Warner retired from ODIs after Australia's World Cup-winning run in November last year, while his last Test was against Pakistan in January. His final T20I came against India on June 24 at the shortest format's recently-concluded global showpiece. "Chapter closed!! It's been an unbelievable experience to play at the highest level for such a long period. Australia was my team. The majority of my career was at the international level. It's been an honour to be able to do this. 100+ games in all formats is my highlight," Warner wrote in an Instagram post on Monday. "I will continue to play franchise cricket for a while, and I am also open to playing for Australia in the Champions trophy if selected," he added. This is not the first time that Warner has shown interest in playing the 50-over tournament. Even while announcing his ODI and Test retirement in January, he had said he'd be open to playing the Champions Trophy, which is set to return after an eight-year hiatus in Pakistan next year. Back in January when Pat Cummins was asked about Warner's return for the Champions Trophy, Cummins had said "I think it's probably time to

give some others a crack [in ODIs], but knowing that he's going to still be playing cricket." "So it might be more of a kind of break glass in an emergency option. But, you know, David is going to be scoring runs somewhere in the world. So you never quite know that this is (the end)." Reflecting on his illustrious career, Warner, who retired as Australia's highest scorer and seventh-most prolific batter in the world in T20 format with 3,277 runs from 110 matches at an average of 33.43 and strike rate of 142.47, thanked his family, fans and teammates. "For all the cricket fans out there, I truly hope I have entertained you and changed cricket, especially tests, in a way where we scored a bit faster than others. We cannot do what we love without the fans, so thanks. "I want to say thanks to everyone out there who has made this possible. My wife and my girls, who sacrificed so much, thank you for all your support. No person will ever know what we've been through. From 112 Tests, he has scored 8,786 runs at an average of 44.59 with 26 hundreds and 37 fifties between 2011 and 2024. He also scored 6,932 runs from 161 ODI matches at an average of 45.30 with the help of 22 centuries and 33 half centuries. "To the players and staff, thanks for putting up with me. No more what's app junk, your ears are now going to be free of my voice. This team has had unbelievable success the last few years and long may this continue. Pat Cummins, Andrew old Mac and staff have got this," he added.

Focus on Jaiswal's batting position as stronger India ready to make statement against Zimbabwe

PTI ■ HARARE

India will find it tough to choose between Yashasvi Jaiswal's seemingly effortless flamboyance and Abhishek Sharma's uber-cool aggression at the top when they rejig their combination to make space for World Cup-winning squad members in the third T20 International against Zimbabwe here on Wednesday. The arrival of Jaiswal, Sanju Samson and Shivam Dube, all of whom were part of the main team during the title-winning run last month, gives the Indian team a formidable look in the most important game of the series as visitors look to press home the advantage after the booster shot of a series-levelling 100-run victory in the second match. Abhishek, the left-handed

opener, did enough to live up to his pre-series hype with a 46-ball century in only his second game and did look the part opening the innings. However, Jaiswal, with a handsome strike rate of 161 plus in 17 T20I matches, including a hundred and four half-centuries, does have the first claim to be skipper Shubman Gill's opening partner by virtue of being the reserve opener of the first-choice T20 team. Although rare but it is not uncommon for batters to be dropped in the very next match after a milestone innings. Case in point were Manoj Tiwary, immediately after his maiden ODI hundred against the West Indies in 2011, and Karun Nair after his triple hundred in a Test match against England in 2016. But skipper Gill is unlikely to let



that happen with his best friend since their U-14 days and someone who scored his first international ton with a willow borrowed from the former. So, it could well be a case of one

of the two southpaws batting at one drop. Sanju Samson, who normally bats at No. 3 for Rajasthan Royals, might come in at No.5, while Ruturaj Gaikwad, who batted at No.3, will probably

drop down a place to No.4. As far as the changes in the playing eleven are concerned, Jaiswal is likely to replace B Sai Sudharsan, who was selected only for the first two games. Samson will come in place of Dhruv Jurel, who had a good outing behind the stumps. Dube, the only player who was a part of T20 World Cup playing XI, is likely to walk in to replace Riyan Parag. The imposing batter could be an even bigger nemesis for the Zimbabwean spinners during the back-10. As far as Zimbabwe is concerned, their batting has left a lot to be desired with scores of 115 while batting first and 134 in the second essay chasing 235. On the Harare Sports Club track where there is a bit of extra bounce available for the spinners, Ravi Bishnoi (6/24 from 8 overs)

and Washington Sundar (3/39 in 8 overs) have proved to be unplayable at times. Bishnoi, who normally bowls 20 to 22 googlies in his 24 balls per match, has varied his pace brilliantly and with home skipper Sikandar Raza being kept quiet, the other batters haven't looked good enough to counter the Indian bowling attack. The 13-run shock defeat in the opener was a timely wake-up call for the young visiting side and it did well to play without five specialist bowlers in the second game where batting first became an advantage. For skipper Gill, a good score would be a necessity after two dry games and he is just too good a player to fail thrice. That could prove to be an ominous sign for the home team bowlers, who don't have even one guy with

express pace. In a nutshell, it could be another one-sided game.

TEAMS (FROM)
India: Shubman Gill (captain), Yashasvi Jaiswal, Abhishek Sharma, Ruturaj Gaikwad, Sanju Samson (wk), Shivam Dube, Rinku Singh, Washington Sundar, Ravi Bishnoi, Avesh Khan, Mukesh Kumar, Riyan Parag, Dhruv Jurel, Khaleel Ahmed, Tushar Deshpande.
Zimbabwe: Sikandar Raza (captain), Faraz Akram, Brian Bennett, Johnathan Campbell, Tendai Chatara, Luke Jongwe, Innocent Kaia, Clive Madande, Wessly Madhevere, Tadiwanashe Marumani, Wellington Masakadza, Brandon Mavuta, Blessing Muzarabani, Dion Myers, Antum Naqvi, Richard Ngarava, Milton Shumba.